

Abstracts

Christine Straehle

'Refugees and the right to return'

Refugees are owed shelter. The obligation to provide shelter is based on the human right to protection from persecution, and grounded in the principle of non-refoulement that signatories to the Geneva Convention have accepted. Beyond this immediate obligation, however, it is not clear what obligations asylum-granting states have towards those they admit. In recent debates, the agency of refugees has been contrasted with images of refugees as victims. Based on the concern for their agency, normative theorists have argued for quick access to rights for refugees in host societies in order for refugees to have access to the means of agency. One of the claims of many refugees, however, is the right to return to their country of origin. I examine if an obligation to realize the right of return can normatively be justified.

Sofie Lekve

'Should we care about the existence and wellbeing of future generations?'

Many people will intuitively believe that we should care about what conditions future people will find themselves in. Whether that regards societal problems or climate change, we seem to feel that someone should do something to secure the wellbeing of future generations. This intuition is however, heavily challenged by the Non Identity Problem, that appears to show that we cannot do harm towards future generations, no matter the horrible conditions they might find themselves in. To be able to find some sense of moral responsibility towards future generations, we must then find a solution to the Non Identity Problem. I will be discussing the Non Identity Problem and I will be presenting some of the proposed solutions, I will also be discussing if there is any way we can be held morally accountable for our actions towards non-existent people.

Ragnhild Jordahl:

'Dispositional theories of possibility and the idea of going beyond the nomic'

In this talk, I present an account of possibility as articulated in Borghini and Williams' 2008 article "A Dispositional Theory of Possibility". One of their claims is that the notion of metaphysical possibility resulting from a dispositional account will encompass more than mere nomic possibility (possibilities in accordance with the laws of nature). I argue against this idea, not only because I disagree with this understanding of metaphysical possibility, but also because their assertion is not supported by their own theory. I suggest instead that the metaphysically possible and the nomically possible are pointing to exactly the same set of possibilities; explanations in the dispositionalist manner are not able to provide a notion of metaphysically possibility that goes beyond the nomic.

Rachel Sterken

'On the socially, politically and epistemologically troubling aspects of generic thought and talk'

Recently, psychologists and philosophers have identified several aspects of generic thought and talk that seem socially, politically and epistemically problematic. In this talk, I outline these and identify some further problematic features that arise from thinking about the semantic, communicative and interactional aspects of generic thought and talk.

Carlota Salvador Megias

'An Intimate Distance: Reconceptualizing Sincerity and Alienation in the Existentialist Tradition'

Existentialists have generally favored authenticity as a personal and political goal, conceiving of it as the best solution to self-alienation; but I will argue that sincerity, understood as the absence of our alienation from others, is the superior approach. This conception of sincerity takes self-alienation to be a constitutive aspect of our alienation from others in that it is the mark of our failure to fulfill our affective commitments. I will show that the fulfillment of our affective commitments is not a matter of “mere” honesty -- in abstraction of the persons with whom we are trying to communicate and of our shared sociolinguistic context -- but rather a function of the particularity of being and expression we enjoy in each of our relationships. To flesh out this conception, I will depend upon a distinction Anne Ozar draws between sincerity and honesty in her work on communicative truthfulness. This distinction allows us to appreciate difficulties in describing interpersonal conflict, deception, and trust absent to traditional existentialists. But while these more nuanced descriptions can help us better account for the value of our relationships and sociolinguistic institutions, I will concede that neither my Ozarian conception of sincerity nor traditional conceptions of authenticity can snuff out the risk of alienation entirely, whether it is from others or from ourselves.

Fiona Woollard

'What a Mother's Got to Do: A moderate account of maternal duties'

Popular discussion of maternal behaviour often treats mothers and pregnant women as if they have a defeasible duty to perform any action that might benefit their child. I have argued elsewhere that this understanding of maternal duty is mistaken and has bad effects on women's well being. The most influential rival accounts are sufficiency accounts, according to which mothers have defeasible duty to ensure their child receives enough benefits. I argue that the sufficiency model is unable to recognise that parents may have a defeasible duty to perform specific actions even though the child still has a high level of overall wellbeing. I propose an alternative moderate account of the duties of mothers and pregnant persons to their offspring.