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ABSTRACTS

Kerem Eroglu

How to think about intentionality

The view that mental states with intentionality are mental representations is popular. Leaving aside the troubles stemming from what might a mental representation really be, the idea of mental states with representational content creates a well-known problem of naturalizing intentionality: locating representational properties in the natural world. In this talk, first I argue that the attempt to find intentional properties in the causal structure of the natural world is motivated by an ungrounded assumption. It is the assumption that there must be content-bearing physical particulars as counterparts of representational mental states and processes. Second, I provide evidence that this assumption is false, based on the fact that mental representations posited in cognitive science are conceptually independent of everyday intentional phenomena such as occurrent thinking episodes. To be a realist about intentional states and processes, one does not need to find content-bearing physical particulars as counterparts of everyday intentionality. If this is true, we need to make changes to how we think about the relationship between scientific and intentional explanations of human cognition. In the last part, I reflect on what these changes might be.

Ruben Noorloos

Spinoza's Apparent Denial of Mental Causation

It is difficult to reconcile Spinoza's denial of interactionism with his adoption of a mind-body identity theory. It seems that he, counterintuitively, accepts the premises, but denies the conclusion of the following argument:

- (1) mode of extension p1 causes mode of extension p2;
- (2) mode of extension p1 = mode of thought m1;
- (3) therefore, m1 causes p2.

There have been several attempts to resolve this problem, notably by distinguishing between intensional and extensional forms of causation in Spinoza (Jarrett, 1991; Della Rocca, 1996; Davidson, 2005; Koistinen, 1996; Lin, 2019), but none of them has been entirely successful.

I argue that careful consideration of the assumptions of the contemporary mental causation debate shows that Spinoza's own view can be reconciled to an identity position in this debate. In other words, Spinoza does not, in fact, deny (3). His real target when he appears

to deny mental causation is a stronger, substance dualist theory of mental causation. Scholars have focused on Spinoza's rejection of interactionism in E3p2, but they seem to have overlooked E3p2's scholium. Studying this scholium makes it clear, however, that Spinoza's target there is Cartesian interactionism, not mental causation per se: he argues against the view "that the body now moves, now is at rest, solely from the mind's command, and that it does a great many things which depend only on the mind's will and its art of thinking" (E3p2s; my italics). But that view would not be endorsed by most contemporary theories of mental causation (which for the most part accept the causal closure of the physical), and it can be denied without rejecting mental causation. I adduce additional arguments from the scholium and defend my interpretation from the apparent textual counter-evidence from E2p6 and E3p2dem.

Aaron Lambert

Is there more than one kind of causation?

Abstract TBA

Zsolt Kapelner

Service as the value of democracy?

Due to recent global political developments the problem of the value of democracy has become increasingly relevant. This problem concerns the question of why democracy is preferable to other forms of government, if it indeed is. There are two basic strategies to try to answer this question. One, called *instrumentalism*, posits that democracy only has instrumental value, i.e. it is only valuable as a means to certain valuable ends, while *non-instrumentalism* posits that democracy should be valued not only as an instrument, but also for its own sake. In this paper I propose an account of the non-instrumental value of democracy which overcomes difficulties rival accounts, i.e. ones based on the concepts of *equality* and *autonomy*, cannot, and provides strong theoretical resources to counter the instrumentalist position. On my account, democracy is valuable because it allows citizens to engage their agency in the service of one another in a specific kind of way, which would otherwise not be open to them. By participating in democratic decision-making, citizens engage their agency in the joint effort of bringing about justice in society, thereby contributing to the good of others. Being able to contribute to the good of others is crucially important for living our moral life to its fullest potential. In complex, modern societies, characterized by high degrees of interdependence and tightly woven ties of social and economic cooperation, we would deny citizens a very important part of living as fully-fledged moral agents among others in political society, if we didn't grant them the option of shaping the terms of social coexistence in the service of their fellow citizens as democratic decision-makers. This account based on the *service-value of democracy* provides strong, non-instrumental grounds for upholding the democratic ideal.

Valentina Martinis

Strong and weak conceptualism

Conceptualism claims that perceptual content is constituted by concepts. I distinguish between two versions of this thesis: strong and weak conceptualism. Strong conceptualism presupposes that having a language is necessary to have concepts, whereas weak conceptualism rejects this condition. According to weak conceptualism, perceptual content is constituted by concepts identified in a way that is independent of a creature's linguistic abilities.

I argue that weak conceptualism avoids the main problems of strong conceptualism, specifically the over-intellectualization of perception and circularity. Moreover, I suggest that weak conceptualism provides a straightforward account for the phenomenal character of adult human perception.

Dong-geun Kim

Plato's Use of Plural Words in the Sophist 263

In this paper, I argue that the neuter plural nouns in the Sophist 263 cannot be replaced by their singular counterpart. Adherents of the Incompatibility Range Interpretation argue that we must eliminate the plurals and read the text with singular nouns. I dispute this view and show that there are occurrences of plural expressions in 240e10 and 256e5. I show that singularising the plural words is problematic in that it ignores Plato's calculated use of plural expressions. In support of the Oxford Interpretation, I contend that Plato calculatedly uses the plural expressions in 251a8-b5 when he is about to reject the late-learners' suggestion that identity predication is only possible form of predication. It will turn out that the Oxford interpretation is a more consistent reading than the Incompatibility Range Interpretation which requires readers to singularise the plural words. As a concluding remark, I address what it implies in Plato's account of truth and falsehood in general.

Marta Santuccio

Testing the neutral monist framework: mental and material concepts

Neutral monism enters the consciousness debate with the hope to provide an account of the relationship of the mental and the material, that is more adequate than orthodox views such dualism and traditional forms of monism.

In this paper I defend a strand of neutral monism according to which 'mental' and 'material' are simply concepts, as opposed to being ontological entities. These concepts are acquired and deployed depending on the perspective, either inward or outward oriented, that an agent stands in with respect to reality.

I focus on defending this view from the challenge that it may be collapsed into a form of mental monism. My argument is based on a revision of the phenomenal concepts strategy initially introduced by physicalists (Loar, 1990), according to which mental concepts are special and refer to an underlying physical property.

I suggest that material concepts are just as special as mental ones, and that both refer to the bona fide neutral properties of the world. With the revised strategy in hand I outline a reasoning route available to the neutral monist to coherently defend herself from the challenge of mental monism, based on the idea that standing in different perspectives with respects to reality does not entail that the mental is fundamental or that is ontologically prior the material.

Nikhil Mahant

Frege's Puzzle and Act-based Propositions

I argue that the act-based conception of propositions, like the one defended by Scott Soames (2015), cannot be used to solve Frege's Puzzle without also giving up the Millian view of names. I begin by identifying two puzzles, both of which have been called Frege's Puzzle and discuss the act-based theorist's solution to the first puzzle. I then raise an objection against the solution and argue that it cannot be overcome unless a concession is made. However, making the concession would make it impossible for the act-based theorist to solve the second puzzle. I further argue that attempts by act-based theorists to solve the puzzle while also maintaining a commitment to the Millian view will force such theoretical commitments on the act-based approaches which seriously undermine their scope and motivation. Thus, any solution to Frege's Puzzle on the act-based account is bound to conflict with the Millian view of names.

Maarten Van Doorn

Against the Search for a Source of Normativity

Many philosophers think normative explanation must bottom out in a source of normativity. In order to have reasons for action, on this view, there must be some valid claims about reasons that do not normatively depend on other reasons – facts whose normative status is intrinsic and essential to their being the facts that they are. Meta-ethical constructivists maintain that certain elements of each agent's motivational set are intrinsically reason-giving, such as her desires or values. Realists, by contrast, hold that certain facts confer their normative significance on themselves: isn't it the essence of pain that we have reason not to engage in pain-causing behavior? Both camps share an assumption: there can be genuine facts about what we have reason to do only if some facts are intrinsically and essentially normative in one of two senses: either some facts external to reasoning are "in themselves" reasons, or some facts about the psychology of the reasoner are "in themselves" reason-giving. Against this assumption, I claim that because there is an important sense in which reason cannot, as Kant put it, respond consciously to a bidding from the outside, the quest for reasons cannot be terminated by the assurance (from the outside) that certain mind-independent facts just are reasons, or that certain psychological facts just are reason-giving. Reason's autonomy, I will argue, is incompatible with there being facts whose normative status (as reasons or as reason-givers) is intrinsic and essential to their being the facts they are. If reasons do not come to an end in something in- or external, then reasons do not come to an end. Reasons are conditional all the way down.

Rob Hoveman

Does Perceptual Naive Realism Solve The Hard Problem Of Consciousness?

Tom Stoneham has argued that perceptual naive realism can solve the hard problem of consciousness. Perceptual naive realism is the theory of perception which states that it is the visible properties of the mind-independent objects of perception which determine the phenomenal character of perception. The hard problem of consciousness on the other hand is the problem of how brain states cause the phenomenal character of experience. If that phenomenal character is in fact caused by the visible properties of the mind-independent objects of perception, then there is no need to ask the question how brain states cause phenomenal character because they don't.

Similarly, John Campbell has argued that the problem of other minds which gives rise to the zombie intuitions which also underlie the specification of the hard problem can be allayed by understanding that the qualities of objects such as their colours lie not in the intrinsic nature of experience located in the head or the brain but in the external, mind-independent objects of perception.

I want to argue that if perceptual naive realism is true, it displaces and perhaps changes the hard problems of consciousness but there are still some very hard problems to deal with. In particular I want to argue two things.

Firstly there is the problem of how to reconcile what seems to be a causal process between the object of perception and the perception of the object with the fact that there is an asymmetric internal relation between the object of perception and the perception itself. In slightly different terms, this is the question of how an object that is ontologically independent of perceptual experience becomes a constitutive part of a perceptual experience which itself has its seat in a person who is ontologically independent of the object of perception. The asymmetric internal relation between the object and the perception of the object is a fundamental relation which seems to have no parallel at the physically more basic level of reflected light impacting on the retina, onwards through the optic nerve and into the neural firings of the brain which, in toto, seems to enable veridical perceptual experience to occur.

Secondly, the presence of the object of perception in the perceptual experience is a presence to a subject. This may be captured by the idea that there is something it is like to have a perceptual experience of an object and its visible properties. That object and its visible properties may be in a public space but there is something essentially private in the subject having that perceptual experience which promises to revive the apparent conceptual possibility of the philosophical zombie and therefore the hard problem of consciousness that it gives rise to.

Jacob Cherry

Why God is Unable to Experience Humor?

In the philosophy of religion, God's nature is one of the most contested matters of debate. Many theologians and philosophers focus on questions concerning God's eternity, knowledge, and alleged love for his creation. Few have concerned themselves with the idea of God's comedic nature. In this paper, I first explore what comedic activity entails, and then the philosophical implications for asserting that God has a sense of humor. I argue that if we understand God as an omniscient entity, he is unable to experience incongruity, and therefore he is unable to experience humor. To do so I offer and defend the following

argument: P1) If God exists, he is omniscient; P2: An omniscient entity has full knowledge of the past, future, and present; P3: God, as an omniscient entity, is unable to experience incongruity; Conclusion; Therefore, God is unable to experience humor.

Zhiwei Gu

Anomalous disjunctivism

I propose a version of disjunctivism, anomalous disjunctivism, as a solution to the screening-off problem. I argue that visual experience and hallucinatory experience have different mechanisms though they share the neural activity in common. The seen thing is the additionally causal condition for seeing, and the non-existence or the causal irrelevance of the hallucinated object is the additionally causal condition for visual hallucination. I also argue that there is a common kind across visual experience and hallucinatory experience. The common kind is relational. Particularly, in seeing, the subject relates to the thing as well as to instantiated sensory qualities, while in hallucinatory experience, the subject relates to an organised group of uninstantiated sensory qualities. The uninstantiated sensory qualities are actual and objectified. So the common kind is a subject's standing in a relation to sensory qualities.

James Cartlidge

Supplementing Heidegger: Anxiety, Boredom and Other Revelatory Moods

In *Being and Time* and other important texts that originally appeared around that time, Heidegger gave an account of what I call 'revelatory moods'. Revelatory moods are special kinds of affective states in which our very way of being in the world dramatically changes: the world loses its significance, we experience profound feelings of meaninglessness and nothingness and are temporarily left hanging, paralyzed in an all-consuming void, unable to latch onto the world and the things in it as we are normally able to do. Undergoing such experiences, Heidegger argues, reveals deeply important truths to us about our predicament as human beings, telling us something about our existence as a whole. His identification of anxiety [Angst] as revelatory in this sense is well known, but he also wrote one of the most significant philosophical treatments of boredom in the Western tradition, which he also claims to be a revelatory mood. But as interesting as his analysis of anxiety and boredom is, his account of revelatory moods in general is crucially lacking: he only ever discussed two of them in any kind of detail. Drawing on Heidegger's analysis of anxiety and boredom, and a passing remark he makes about joy, I will suggest four more candidates for revelatory moods: joy, sadness, loneliness and awe. In his treatment of anxiety and boredom, Heidegger gives us reason to believe that these four moods can also be revelatory in the sense I will describe, and he seems to suggest that revelatory moods in general form an integral part of our lifelong existential struggle to come to terms with our situation as free beings that inhabit and create the significance of the world.

Huaming Xu

Title: Practical Knowledge as a Unity of Thought and Action

Very often we make use of the distinction between what is inside and what is outside of our minds. This distinction by itself is unproblematic, but it tends to be radicalized in philosophy. The radicalization consists in turning this distinction into a problematic separation of the inner from the outer, conceiving of the two as independently intelligible. A paradigmatic example is the Cartesian substance dualism (regardless of whether Descartes holds this view). In this talk, I will present my research proposal which is intended to address the question of how the inner and the outer are inter-related. Nevertheless, this research will not explore all ways in which the two domains are inter-related, but only the question of how thought is manifested internally—as opposed to externally—in action. The main purpose of this inquiry is to show that, when thought is manifested internally in action, they form one unified reality, rather than two distinct ones that somehow happen to relate to each other. In this unity which, I shall argue, is to be found in practical knowledge, what is inside one's mind is not a separate, independently understandable reality from what is outside one's mind, and vice versa.

Forrest Schreick

Leibniz, Concomitance, and the Existence of God

Despite his theology playing a central role in much of his metaphysics, Leibniz was critical of the contemporarily accepted proofs of the existence of God. He took the pursuit of a suitable proof seriously and produced a handful of his own and is perhaps best known in this philosophical area for his version of the cosmological argument. Given that Leibniz engaged seriously and critically with the arguments for the existence of God, it should be of particular interest when Leibniz notes an argument he takes to be particularly strong. We find such an argument in his correspondence with Antoine Arnauld. In his letter dated 8 December 1636, Leibniz calls this argument "one of the most beautiful proofs that can be given of the necessity of a substance supreme and cause of all things." Later in the correspondence, in his letter dated 19 October 1687, he makes the further claim that it "*is one of the strongest proofs of the existence of God*" (emphasis in original). Given Leibniz's critical attitude, we should expect the argument he references here to be exceedingly impressive. However, it involves what is seen as one of his most implausible doctrines: the hypothesis of concomitance or, as it is later called, pre-established harmony. I will lay out what I take to be Leibniz's argument. Then, I will show that it is deeply flawed. Finally, I will suggest some ways either Leibniz might avoid this problem or how our understanding of the argument might be mistaken.