



Workshop

Autonomy, Norms, and Emotional Attunement

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Politeia Library, Università degli Studi di Milano, Via Festa del Perdono 7

Organizers

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Abstracts

Stefano Bacin (University of Milan)

Kantian Autonomy, Fast and Slow

Much work has been done to show how a Kantian conception of morality is able to accommodate the structural significance of emotions (Cohen 2019, Borges 2019; also Bacin 2010, Sensen 2012) and to respond to the debunking arguments coming from experimental philosophy (e.g. Kleingeld 2014, Dean 2010). Furthermore, other authors have forcefully contended that the Kantian conception of agency includes, and even depends from, a constitutive emotional dimension (Bagnoli 2011, 2015, 2018). I shall argue in the paper, more generally, that a Kantian view is able to accommodate the importance of emotions as well as the crucial role of an ‘intuitive’ response to morally relevant cases. The twofold aspect of Kantian autonomy unfolds from the rejection of a widespread pessimism about the role of reasons and reasoning in moral psychology (D’Arms & Jacobson 2014). After clarifying the opposition of Kantian rationalism to this form of hyper-rationalism, I aim to show how Kantian autonomy develops in both ‘fast’ and ‘slow’ processes.



Carla Bagnoli (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia)

Autonomy and Emotional Attunement: the Case of Emotional Contagion

According to some studies, agents can become emotionally attuned with the emotions of others by way of an “emotional contagion” (Hatfield et al. 1994). Since emotion by contagion spreads without any exercise of judgment, it counts as an attack on the agent’s autonomy. The paper starts with a comparative analysis of the mechanism of emotional contagion and similar psychological phenomena of “emotional resonance” that are not based on mimicry, such as sympathy and distal compassion. These terms cover varieties of phenomena which require a differentiated treatment (Parr 2001). Building upon recent work on neuroscience, I take emotions to be embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended. I shall focus on emotional modes of regulating our convergence with others (Mackenzie 2002), and show how they cohere and aptly enrich a relational conception of autonomy (Bagnoli 2019). The trust of the argument is that this refined conception of autonomy is robust enough to explain away emotional contagion and accommodate actions originated in emotional resonance.



Sofia Bonicalzi (LMU München)

Intention, Action, Responsibility. An Empirically Tractable Model

Philosophical models of intentional action emphasise the capacity to act for reasons and in view of goals. The corresponding subjective feeling of being in control of our actions and their consequences in the external world has been referred to as the sense of agency. However, findings in the cognitive neuroscience of action have cast doubt both on the explanatory relevance of psychological states and on people's metacognitive ability to introspect upon them. Correspondingly, the sense of agency might depend on inferential processes based on performance. The cognitive neuroscience of action often settles for a definition by exclusion whereby intentional actions are framed as internally-generated, i.e., not directly triggered by external stimuli, and no direct mention to any psychological state is provided. If this framework is not mistaken, are we acting coherently in the way we normatively assess people's behaviour? I will discuss the plausibility of two potential positive answers to this question. One view maintains that knowledge about the mechanistic bases of intention and action is irrelevant because it cannot have any long-lasting impact on the way we deal with interpersonal interactions and responsibility attributions. The other view, which I will defend, directly engages with science, aiming at carving out an empirically tractable model of how people are able to control their actions and can be held responsible for them.



Andrea Borghini (University of Milan)

Hunger as a Bodily Sensation

The notion of hunger and, more broadly, of a state explanatorily correlated to the introjection of food is central to our understanding of (at least) four important topics: famine, eating disorders, obesity, and the aesthetics of food. Despite its significance, the philosophical debate over how such notion should be understood is sparse. We can find theoretical and practical reasons to regard hunger as a bodily sensation, as a form of desire, as an emotion, or as mood. In this paper, I delve into the perspective according to which hunger is a bodily sensation. I distinguish and motivate two main views, one according to which hunger is a form of pain and one according to which it is a *sui generis* bodily sensation. I then assess the plausibility of the views with respect to the four topics listed above.



Michael Brady (University of Glasgow)

Suffering and Autonomy at the End of Life

There is considerable plausibility to the idea that suffering has significant value. A central aspect of this positive story has to do with the role that suffering has in the development and expression of *virtue*. One important aspect of this story is the role that suffering has in the development of understanding and the associated virtue of wisdom. Through suffering, we learn about and come to understand more deeply who we are and what we care about. In this paper I will focus on the distinctive kinds of understanding that suffering can bring, and what this might mean for the augmentation of autonomy at end of life.



Mario De Caro (Roma Tre University & Tufts University)

Naturalism and the Morality of Machines

First came science-fiction writers (such as Isaac Asimov, A.C. Clarke, and the authors of Star Trek), scientists (such as John McCarthy, Herbert Simon, and Marvin Minsky) and philosophers of mind (such as Daniel Dennett, Donald Davidson, and John Searle). They all discussed the possibility that machines could one day become very similar to humans. More recently, also many moral philosophers and legal scholars have started to reflect on this possibility, since the astonishing advances of science and technology in the production of increasingly intelligent and autonomous machines have begun to raise urgent issues about whether and how we should attribute moral and legal responsibility to them. In my paper, I will discuss this issue by considering two possible points of view: that of the scientific naturalists, who claim that all human features are accountable by the natural sciences, and the liberal naturalists, who claim that humans have (non-supernatural) features, including free will and moral responsibility, that cannot be accounted by the natural sciences.



David Henderson (University of Nebraska, Lincoln)

Epistemic Norms, Cooperative Epistemic Production and Tractable Sharing

Human epistemic agents are amazingly interdependent. Most of what we know, we know from others—and this conditions the quality and productivity of any given agent’s (more or less) individual) epistemic practice. If others use less reliable processes or practices, one’s own epistemic reliability is threatened. By the same token, to the extent that others use acceptably reliable processes we can continue to cooperatively extend and refine vast stocks of true beliefs. I here reflect on the character of epistemic norms—those normative epistemic sensitivities by which we humans manage in our communities to coordinate and cooperate. Drawing on work by Bicchieri and others, I will explore how epistemic norms serve in two ways. They allow agents in communities to cooperate in reliable belief production. They also provide a community context in which testimonial sharing becomes tractable. The benefits of epistemic cooperation only obtain insofar we distributively do much hard work, and then share in the results. Notice that such sharing only lightens the epistemic load on individuals if one does not have to do too much to be in a position to warrantably depend on one’s sources. Norms are crucial here.



Johannes Roessler (University of Warwick)

Deliberative and Preempting Reasons

In this talk, I explore the possibility that there are reasons that preempt deliberation. A ‘preempting’ reason would be a fact that supports a given attitude and can be one’s reason for holding the attitude but also manifestly *entails* that one has that attitude and so provides no basis on which one could coherently make up one’s mind about the relevant question. I introduce the idea by reference to a view of perceptual knowledge that is increasingly receiving attention in epistemology. The view says that (a) the explanatory connection



between perception and knowledge, as conceived in our ordinary explanatory and dialectical practice, is basic, not to be analyzed in terms of the way perception justifies beliefs, and (b) our best reasons for non-inferential perceptual beliefs are typically facts such as ‘I can see (and thus know) that p’. I discuss the notion of a preempting reason in the broader context of the workshop by considering ways of extending it to the case of conative and affective attitudes, and by asking how it bears on views that affirm essential connections between reasons and self-determination.

Abe Roth (Ohio State University)

Autonomy and Theory of Mind; Developmental Considerations

Recent work in developmental psychology suggests that engaging in joint action is important for acquiring a theory of mind – that is, for acquiring the cognitive resources that enable one to attribute mental states to others, understand their behavior, and navigate social interactions (e.g. Tomasello and Rakoczy 2003). But prevailing accounts of joint action assume that participating agents already possess a great deal of sophistication in this regard (Bratman 2014). Joint action, so understood, cannot play the developmental role that some psychologists envision for it. Minimal accounts of joint action, which assume little in the way of mind-reading abilities, have been proposed to address this problem (Butterfill 2012, Pacherie 2013, Tollefsen 2005). However, these views fail to satisfy normative conditions that are constitutive of joint action. What we need for the developmental story is a form of practical intimacy where one can take up another’s intention as if it were one’s own (Story ms., Roth 2004). This raises legitimate worries about individual autonomy. These concerns should be taken seriously, but they can be addressed by drawing on a reasons-responsive account of autonomy in conjunction with the idea of intention as a mechanism for the preservation and transmission of reasons.



Karsten Stueber (College of the Holy Cross)

The Moralizing Animal and the Moral Stance: In-Group Bias, Empathy, and the Sensus Communis

The talk intends to clear up some of the fundamental misconceptions that have plagued recent discussion in meta-ethics, particularly those inspired by evolutionary considerations and empirical investigations into the dark and bright sides of empathy. What the empirical research shows is that humans are by nature moralizing animals, that is, animals that care very much about the social conformity of the members of the group that they belong to and for that very reason think of certain norms as having a peculiar and emotionally exalted status in contrast to mere conventional norms. Such moralizing discourse has however to be distinguished from the ideal of a moral stance, that is, a stance within which I regard myself to be equidistant from all other human being and where I abstract from the fact that they are friends or enemies or members of the in-group or out-group. As I will argue the ideal of a genuine moral stance is best conceived of as a reflective achievement and its normative significance it is best reconstructed in light Adam Smith’s insights about the role of empathy in the social domain and Kant’s appeal to the *sensus communis* in his third Critique, which I understand as an appreciative sensitivity to the wide range of possible instantiations of human agency.



Mark Timmons (University of Arizona)

Making Sense of Gratitude: A Phenomenological Approach

There is a puzzle over the idea of a debt of gratitude: if to incur a debt is to incur a duty, then how can there be a debt of gratitude? After all, a genuine act of beneficence is where a benefactor confers a benefit upon a recipient with “no strings attached;” it represents a gift. As Claudia Card (1988) once quipped: “A duty of gratitude sounds like a joke.” Reactions to this puzzle vary from attempts to defend the idea of a debt of gratitude (Manela 2015) to rejecting the idea of any such debt (Wellman 1999). We argue that (i) this alleged puzzle and the various philosophical reactions to it result from philosophers working with a limited set of philosophical resources and that (ii) careful reflection on the phenomenology of ordinary instances of gratitude reveals that there is a distinctive role for reasons that is normative for gratitude—reasons of reciprocity—which preserves and make sense of there being debts of gratitude without those debts being duties.



Marijana Vujosevic (Leiden University)

The Kantian Capacity for Self-Control Considered as Abstraction

Even when closer attention is paid to the Kantian capacity for self-control, it is interpreted as an instrument for compelling ourselves to act on the basis of the maxims we have adopted. To the extent that we merely acknowledge its role in following already-adopted maxims, however, we fail to capture the distinctive aspect of moral self-control identified by Kant. In this paper, I propose a fuller account of the Kantian capacity for self-control by analysing it as abstraction. Kant understands abstraction as the activity of diverting our attention from certain sensible impressions by focusing it on something else. His point seems to be that we gain control over the state of some representations in our minds by disregarding various sensible impressions. My analysis shows that Kant’s conception of moral self-control also involves self-control’s role in adopting morally correct maxims. Furthermore, it offers a good theoretical basis for a novel approach to self-control. Despite numerous empirical studies that bolster the close tie between self-control and attention, the available literature on moral psychology seems to contain no attempt to fully clarify self-control as the ability to redirect attention.

