

UPJA Hybrid Conference for Undergraduate Philosophy
Thursday, 26th of October, 2023

10 AM – 5 PM AEDT (UTC+11)

Keynote Address

10am. Consequentialism, Cluelessness, Clumsiness, and Counterfactuals
Prof. Alan Hájek, Australian National University

According to objective consequentialism, a morally right action is one that has the best consequences. (These are not just the immediate consequences of the actions, but the long-term consequences, perhaps until the end of history.) I will argue that on one understanding this makes no sense, and on another understanding, it has a startling metaphysical presupposition concerning counterfactuals. Objective consequentialism has faced various objections, including the problem of “cluelessness”: we have no idea what most of the consequences of our actions will be. I think that on these understandings, objective consequentialism has a far worse problem: its very foundations are highly dubious. Even granting these foundations, a worse problem than cluelessness remains, which I call “clumsiness”. Moreover, I think that these problems quickly generalise to a number of other moral theories. But the point is most easily made for objective consequentialism, so I will focus largely on it.

I will consider three ways that objective consequentialism might be improved:

- 1) Appeal instead to short-term consequences of actions;
- 2) Understand consequences with objective probabilities;
- 3) Understand consequences with subjective/evidential probabilities.

I will argue that 1) still fails, but that 2) and 3) are the best prospects for consequentialism.

Student Presentations

11am. The Homunculi-Headed Robot, Qualia, and Functionalism

Jack Blackman, Victoria University of Wellington

This paper will exhibit why Ned Block's homunculi-headed robot, a thought experiment purported to object to functionalism, cannot be relied on as a sound objection to functionalism. The main motion of this paper will focus on the subject of qualia, and how the robot engenders implications pertaining to qualia which do not successfully dismount functionalism. Two objections germane to qualia will be discussed; with these being the nature of qualia that Block presupposes to exist within functionalism, and the phenomenological considerations Block relies on in his objection, and how they are incorrect and ultimately invalid.

12pm. "I'm the same - but I'm not": Transracial Adoptees, Hermeneutic Injustice, and Coalitional politics

Beau Kent

This paper aims to achieve two goals: first, to argue that transracial adoptees lack the critical resources to adequately articulate their experiences, which constitutes a hermeneutical injustice. Second, to point towards potential strategies or ways of thinking that could assist adoptees in navigating their experiences which are yet to be widely recognised, both individually and as a community. I will argue that there is a relationality to the adoptee identity which means that there are few conceptual resources that adoptees can draw on that capture their experience at the intersection of white enculturation and a body of colour; this constitutes a hermeneutical injustice. I then provide a potential method for concept generation using Mariana Ortega's notion of hometactics to argue that one way forward may be to engage in a practical 'making-do' rather than try to create more theoretically rigorous and abstract concepts. Finally, I point towards the possibility of coalitional politics through the notion of complex communication in order to create strong political intra and inter-group alliances.

Break

2pm. Empathetic Engagement's Centrality within Relational Theory
Edwin Chia-en Chen, Macquarie University

Dominant abstract approaches in animal ethics are problematic in neglecting context and particularity. Empathetic engagement within relational theory tackles this and is necessary for gaining a sufficient understanding of the epistemic and ethical challenges within research, particularly when the Othered are involved. This is central within relational approaches in animal research ethics and within this, 3 key extended insights are: 1/ abstract dominant approaches to animal research ethics lack context and particularity of empathetic engagement that is concretely required to motivate moral actions; 2/ evaluations of Othered identities as defective reasoners can be rehabilitated through empathetic engagement to demonstrate research animal subjects have moral value; 3/ empirical exposures through empathetic engagements become necessary for accurate and sufficient epistemic and ethical understandings of the reality of animal research challenges. I conclude that integrating relational theory and the dominant approaches to research challenges are not necessarily in opposition, but each can contribute to necessary and complementary perspectives to a sufficient understanding of ethics. This essential realisation sets the groundwork for the unification of considerations that are essential for a collaboratively constructed Science of Morality that can enjoy the support of a broad enough consensus - for which relational empathy is central.

3pm. Confucius and Epistemic Injustice
Tran Phuoc Lam Huy, VinUniversity

Epistemic injustices theory, introduced by Miranda Fricker (2007) has been a topic of discussion among philosophy scholars. However, application of epistemic injustices as a virtue in Asian philosophies were left unexplored. In this paper, I attempt to draw attention to the potential contribution of Confucius (and Confucianism) to the discussion of testimonial injustice, a central case of epistemic injustice. By focusing on analyzing the Analect, I reveal Confucius's opposition ideas toward epistemic injustices with Xiaoren & Fake Junzi being two examples for lacking virtues of epistemic injustices. From there, I propose two Confucius' virtues for enhancing the reliability of virtues of epistemic injustice: "the Love of Learning" (xuehe) and perspective reflection (si 思). To conclude, I analyze how Ren (仁) could be an ideal state of testimonial justice.

4pm. Two-Dimensional Modal Semantics and the Zombie Intuition
Charlotte Senior, University of Sydney

In this paper I discuss David Chalmer's 'zombie argument' in favour of a dualistic theory of the mind. I begin by explaining Chalmer's original argument and David Braddon-Mitchell's use of Two-Dimensional Modal Semantics in "Qualia and Analytic Conditionals" (2003) to distinguish two types of conceivability and put pressure on the zombie intuition as proof of dualism. I then critically evaluate Chalmer's defence of the zombie intuition, focussing on his reliance on microphysical properties and his conception of secondary conceivability. Stephen Yablo's account of conceivability, specifically regarding undecidability, is fruitful when explicating the latter issue. I end by concluding that although Chalmer's defence of the zombie intuition at least partially relies on problematic argumentation, the problems relating to physicalism that his defence presents still bear significant weight.