

3rd SoCal Metaphysics Network Conference

Saturday March 16th
Humanities Gateway (HG) 1030

9:00-10:10: Michael Della Rocca (Yale University) "The Original Sin of Analytical Philosophy"

Chair: Ari Koslow

10:15-11:25: Katie Elliott (Brandeis University) "The Principal Principle: What is it? Who cares?"

Chair: Ari Koslow

11:30-12:40: John Martin Fischer (UC Riverside) "An Actual Sequence Theory of Moral Responsibility"

Chair: Mark Fiocco

12:40-2:15 Lunch Break

2:15-3:25 : Carolina Sartorio (Rutgers University) "Where ethics meets metaphysics"

Chair: Mark Fiocco

3:30-4:40: Erica Shumener (Syracuse University) "When Properties Collapse"

Chair: Kate Ritchie

4:45-5:55 Gabriel Uzquiano (University of Southern California) "On Being in Two Places at Once"

Chair: Kate Ritchie

Abstracts

Michael Della Rocca "The Original Sin of Analytical Philosophy"

Abstract: This paper examines five crucial and influential episodes from early analytical philosophy in which Frege, Russell, Moore, and others play key roles. In each episode, the debate is, I argue, structurally analogous to the debate over Cartesian mind-body interaction. In particular, I argue that just as the Cartesian position in the interaction debate turns on whether the Principle of Sufficient Reason (the PSR) is rejected—Descartes, the great (as will become apparent) anti-rationalist, rejects the PSR in this case—so too the seminal positions taken up by these early analytical philosophers turn on the anti-rationalist denial of the PSR. Further and perhaps disturbingly, these seminal positions are thus as problematic as the problematic Cartesian position with regard to mind-body interaction.

Katie Elliott "The Principal Principle: What is it? Who cares?"

Abstract: In 1986, David Lewis argued that any metaphysical account of the nomic posits of science (e.g., laws, causes, dispositions) faces a bad problem involving objective chance and something called "the Principal Principle": non-reductive theories of chance make the Principal Principle utterly mysterious, while reductive theories of chance make the Principal Principle false. Nowadays, this bad problem gets relatively little attention from metaphysicians of science—problems like how to build a theory on which laws are explanatory, or how to build a theory of laws that makes them both mind independent and discoverable—have taken center stage. I suspect that this shift in focus has less to do with our having solved Lewis's bad problem and more to do with some common confusions about what the Principal Principle says. In this talk, I aim to give a clear, accessible, and non-technical description of the Principal Principle and its centrality to our understanding of the nature of chance.

John Martin Fischer "An Actual Sequence Theory of Moral Responsibility"

Abstract: I will defend the "actual-sequence" approach to moral responsibility against certain important objections. The first part of the paper deals with Frankfurt-style Cases and their relationship to the Principle of Alternative Possibilities. The second is about the Fair Opportunity to Avoid Wrongdoing requirement for moral responsibility. I'll focus on the first part. The second is totally optional (the first only optional!). My overall approach is Supercompatibilistic Semicompatibilism: moral responsibility is compatible with both causal determinism and indeterminism, even if these doctrines rule out "regulative control"/freedom to choose and do otherwise.

Carolina Sartorio "Where ethics meets metaphysics"

Abstract: Can ethics inform metaphysics? In particular, can facts about moral responsibility be used as premises in our metaphysical theorizing about concepts like causation? Given the standard view about the relation between facts about moral responsibility and facts about causation, which is that the former are grounded in the latter, the most natural methodology seems to be a “causation first” methodology (to establish the causal facts about a case first, and to then use those facts to derive the moral responsibility facts). In this talk I argue that this isn’t always the right methodology: I give various examples of reverse inferences that are plausibly warranted, even if moral responsibility is grounded in causation.

Erica Shumener “When Properties Collapse”

Abstract: “Qua” or “as a” constructions appear in many philosophical contexts, including in metaphysics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of language, and philosophy of action. One important function of qua-ascriptions is to block violations of Leibniz’s Law. We can truthfully state that the old Penn Station was destroyed qua building and that the old Penn Station still exists qua pile of bricks without claiming that the old Penn Station was destroyed and still exists. That is, we can sometimes claim that an object x is F qua G without concluding that x is F . This paper uses the notion of real definition to provide an account of when we can and cannot infer x is F from the fact that x is F qua G . I apply the proposal to cases that potentially threaten Leibniz’s Law and explain how my proposal can be adopted by different metaphysical theories of qua-ascriptions.

Gabriel Uzquiano “On Being in Two Places at Once”

Abstract: What is it for something to be in two places at once? It may not seem possible for a material object to exactly occupy two regions of space at once, but there is no reason to restrict attention to spatial location. Both the letter 'e' and the universal hydrogen occur twice in the word-type 'see' and the structural universal H₂O, respectively. The stakes are even higher when it comes to temporal location. For one way to make sense of endurance as a model of persistence is as the hypothesis that a material object is exactly located at every time at which it exists.