

Abstracts: listed in the order in which the papers appear in the program

When Do Differences Make a Difference? Re-examining Models of Cognitive Divisions of Labour in Scientific Communities

Ahmed AlJuhany

When exploring divisions of labour within scientific communities, philosophers often argue that diversity - differences in beliefs, interests and investigative strategies - promotes optimal distributions of research efforts. In a prominent strand of the literature, philosophers use epistemic landscape models, which depict scientists as “hill climbers” exploring a space of possible discoveries, to argue that communities can maximise the number of discoveries made by diversifying their investigative strategies. In this paper, I argue that the notion of diversity used in these models relies on a problematic depiction of scientists, one that obscures the way in which science is actually practised. Epistemic landscape models depict scientists as pursuing either an “imitative” or a “creative” investigative strategy. Considering actual scientific practice, however, reveals that scientific investigations involve selective imitations and deviations from past bodies of work. Scientists imitate their peers and predecessors in order to produce novel contributions. There is no useful distinction to be drawn between “imitators” and “creatives,” then, as scientists are often both.

Can Deontic Logic Tell Us Something About Moral Theories?

Sophia Kimiagari

The neutrality thesis regarding the relationship between moral theories and deontic logic states that deontic logic must remain neutral with respect to moral theories. It is the job of moral arguments to arbitrate between moral theories. Through the years, neutrality of logic in general and deontic logic in particular have been questioned. But there is an interesting question that has remained unanswered. Given non-neutrality of deontic logic, what kind of interactions can we expect between deontic logic and moral theories? My paper is an attempt to deal with this question. I will argue that when there is a dominant deontic logic system capturing the particular data around a particular moral discussion or when the consistency and coherency of a moral theory is under question, deontic logic can help ethicists decide between moral theories.

What's In It For Me? Why Prima Facie Incentives Are Insufficient for Maintaining Institutions Andrew Allison

J.P. Smit, Filip Buekens, and Stan Du Plessis have put forth the incentivized actions view of institutions as an alternative to John Searle's institutional facts. Smit et al. argue that what they term prima facie incentives –incentives which are motivating but do not necessarily lead to the uniform action– are sufficient for the maintenance of institutions. Using two counterexamples –one regarding money and one regarding borders– I argue that prima facie incentives are insufficient for maintaining institutions. These are cases in which it is unclear that an institution exists but the requisite prima facie incentives are nonetheless present. I then offer a route that the incentivized actions view could take; specifying that the incentivized action take place a certain portion of the time. I conclude by arguing that this amendment will not suffice and suggest that Searle's social facts may be necessary for a description of some institutions

One Two or Neither: An exploration of the ontology of pregnancy

Chantal Bazinet

In pregnancy, when (if ever) does one become two? While ethicists have had much to say about when a foetus acquires moral rights (the moment of birth, the moment of conception, or some other milestone), the ontology of pregnancy have been afforded very little thought. This paper will explore two competing ontological models, substance ontology and process ontology. Substance ontology views of pregnancy, the foetal-container model and the parthood model, have defended a viewpoint whereby the answer to the above question is one or two. By contrast, process ontology views defend a viewpoint whereby the answer is somewhere in-between one and two. Both of these viewpoints face significant challenges in creating a coherent theory, and this paper will raise some of the challenges that will require responses.

Do You Hear What I Hear?: Uptake and the Role of the Hearer in Speech Acts

Maria Genova

Recent work on speech act theory has given particular attention to the role of uptake, typically understood as the hearer's recognition of a speaker's communicative intentions. Quill R Kukla has proposed a modified model of uptake, the constitution theory, which argues that the hearer not only has the power to render an utterance a success or failure but has the further ability to determine the nature of the utterance, giving the hearer power in determining what type of act is performed. I defend the constitution theory of uptake against recent criticisms from Lucy McDonald and demonstrate that her objections do not pose a significant challenge to the theory

Diagnosing the DSM: Reliability, Validity, and Practicality

Liyen Zhou

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) is designed to provide a consistent and strong guide for psychiatric diagnosis. It classifies disorders according to different sets of symptoms and offers symptom checklists for clinical practice. Critics maintain that this symptom-based classification cannot meet the purpose due to its low reliability and low validity: The classification is fuzzy; disorders in the DSM may be artifactual. However, clinicians believe that the DSM facilitates diagnosis and satisfies the goal of practicality to some extent. This raises the question, "how could a manual without sufficient reliability and validity serve as a basis for effective diagnosis?" I keep this question open-ended and give my tentative answer. I argue that reliability and validity do not necessarily benefit practicality. Since researches on the nature and etiology of mental disorders remain underdeveloped, the possibility exists that over-pursuing reliability and validity may impair practicality.

Causal Counterfactual without Pruning

Yudi Huang

Given the close connection between counterfactuals and causation, theorists have used causal models to analyze counterfactuals. To evaluate a counterfactual in a causal model, one needs to modify the model to bring about the antecedent and see if the consequent holds in the resulting models. Two theories have been proposed about how to transform the model: according to interventionism, one should set the antecedent variable to the corresponding value and prune the causal input from its parents; according to the minimal-model theory, one should consider all antecedent-verifying models that are consistent with the actual causal laws and keep intact as many variables as possible. While interventionism is under criticism as it invalidates the intuitive inference of Modus Ponens, the minimal-model theory is believed to be immune to this problem. The minimal-model theory saves Modus Ponens by preserving all causal laws, but, as I will argue, the way it preserves the laws is suspect.

Engaging the Public: How to Embed Democratic Values into Scientific Research on Thick Concepts

Yue Wang

Thick concepts, as a hybrid of evaluation and description, are widely used in contemporary social and life sciences. Since the definition of thick concepts requires an evaluative standard, and value judgments in such concepts are rarely discussed systematically, there is no agreement on the proper way to embed values to produce good science. One plausible approach is the democratic approach which argues that thick concepts should be coproduced by a democratic process with stakeholders' engagement and critical interaction between different groups. However, an effective collaborative process is not easy to achieve, especially when stakeholders don't understand the technical details of the scientific program and won't be able to give useful information to scientists. In this paper, I will analyze existing models of the collaborative process from this aspect and give a potential recommendation. In my view, an effective collaborative process should allow different groups to utilize their respective expertise.