Joint Irish Philosophy Colloquium

Hosted by:

Trinity College Dublin
and
University College Cork

Sponsored by the Irish Philosophical Society

Venue   Online, Zoom

Time   Mondays, 4-6pm, Irish Local Time

Chairs   Adina Preda, Philosophy, TCD, Director of Trinity Centre for Justice and Values

Cara Nine, Philosophy, UCC, President of Irish Philosophical Society

To be added to the Zoom invite list, please email predaa@tcd.ie

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Dates and Speakers

October 5 2020	**Jesse Spafford, TCD** Chair: Adina Preda *Explanation, Justification, and Egalitarianism* In making the moral case for equality, many egalitarians presume that inequality requires justification in a way that equality does not. However, this *egalitarian presumption* has been called into question by libertarian critics such as Jason Brennan, who argue that this justificatory asymmetry cannot be simply assumed without argument. This paper attempts to defend the egalitarian presumption by positing a general theory of which states of affairs must be justified. To do this, it considers a different sort of semantic object that, as it turns out, has much in common with justifications, namely *explanations*. Specifically, the paper presents a number of properties of explanation, and, for each one, suggest that there is an analogous property of justification. It then makes (and defends) the inductive inference that this pattern extends to cover two additional properties of explanation, the justificatory analogs of which vindicate the egalitarian presumption.

October 19 2020	**Kian Mintz-Woo, UCC** Chair: Cara Nine *Progress without convergence* This essay defends three independent claims arising from the rejection of the Myth of Expertise, i.e. that philosophers are better placed than non-philosophers to know the true substantive moral theories. The first claim is that rejecting the Myth of Expertise is compatible with an account of moral expertise, which I call Weak Moral Expertise. The second claim is that Weak Moral Expertise is an attractive unifying account of three activities that moral philosophers do and is compatible with a notion of moral progress. These factors make it a better candidate for expertise than what I call Strong Moral Expertise. The final claim is that this account of moral philosophy and the rejection of the Myth of Expertise suggests a deeply democratic model of public engagement, which I call Public Final Reflective Equilibrium. These factors make it a better candidate for a method of including the public than what I call Public Initial Reflective Equilibrium. Although these three claims can be accepted independently, together they form a novel and unified picture of the metaphilosophy of moral expertise, moral progress, and philosophical methodology, which involves the public in evaluating the success of moral theories.
November 2 2020	**Ittay Nissan, HUJ** Chair: Cara Nine *Attitudes to risk are complicated* It is well known that the representation of attitudes to risk in orthodox decision theory is limited in several respects. Different ways to overcome these limitations were suggested in the literature. I make a distinction between two families of approaches to this problem, "non-expected utility" approaches and "re-individuation" approaches, and argue that there is a significant normative (rather than merely methodological) difference between these two families. I do that by presenting a puzzle in distributive ethics and arguing that while "re-individuation" approaches have the conceptual resources needed to solve it, "non-expected utility" approaches do not. I then move to discuss what I take to be the most systematic and well-developed approach in the "re-individuation" family, the one suggested by Orri Stefansson and Richard Bradley (and developed by Zeev Goldschmidt and me), and present experimental evidence for it (based on two experiments conducted in collaboration with Haim Cohen, Anat Meril and Sun Bleicher).

November 16 2020	**Saloni De Souza, UCL** Chair: Adina Preda *Unbreakable Laws Broken? Parmenides 146b2-5* In this paper, I offer a new interpretation of Parmenides 146b2-5. According to this reading, Plato asks us to reflect on a counter-factual scenario: $\Diamond \exists x \exists y$ $(\neg x=y \wedge \neg x \neq y)) \wedge \forall x \forall y ((\neg x=y \wedge \neg x \neq y) \rightarrow ((Pxy \vee Wxy) \wedge \neg (Pxy \wedge Wxy))$, where P is the part-whole relation and W is the whole-part relation. I suggest that, despite first appearances, this scenario is worth taking seriously because it prompts us to reflect on a problem with reconciling particular cases of parts and wholes with apparent laws of identity and nonidentity.
November 30 2020	**Michelle Panchuk, Murray State University** Chair: Adina Preda *Such is the Kingdom: Toward a Philosophical Theology of Child Liberation* Children are among the most frequently abused and systematically marginalized members of our society—oppression that is only intensified as one considers children's inter-sectional identities. The average child is physically weaker and less knowledgeable than the average adult; children are completely dependent upon the adults in their lives; and in a US context they can be legally, physically assaulted by parents and teachers; they are frequently dismissed as competent witnesses to their own abuse, oppression, and marginalization, yet can be tried for their own crimes as adults and incarcerated for long periods of time. Matters are not often better and are sometimes significantly worse within religious contexts where children are viewed as inherently broken and sinful. Yet, Christians worship a savior who not only invited the little children to come to him, but also suggested that they are prime exemplars of the kingdom of heaven. Both their marginalization and their place within the Christian economy suggests that we are in need of an analytic theology of child liberation. Drawing on the traditions of liberation theology and feminist theories of oppression and epistemic injustice, I will argue for a model of Christian child liberation theology. To pursue liberation for children who will remain physically, epistemically, and emotionally dependent for at least some years of their lives requires that Christian adults 1) recognize the essential dependence of all humans, 2) embrace a moral and religious duty to enable and scaffold the existing spiritual agency of children, and 3) commit to mentoring the further development of that agency, such that children are treated not merely as observers of Christian communities and practices, but as active participants and contributors to it.

December 7 2020	Rachel Handley, TCD – In person, Thomas Davies Theatre, TCD
	Error Theory, Ideal Quasi-Realism, and Robust Realism
	Quasi-Realism is a response to Mackie's Error Theory. On error theory our moral discourse sounds realist, and it employs mind-independent robustly realist versions of concepts like moral objectivity and moral authority. Due to the metaphysical and epistemological problems in justifying these concepts, however, the error theorist concludes that when we talk of moral objectivity, we talk in error. Quasi-realism responds to error theory by explaining how realist sounding moral talk is not erroneous because it can be given an expressivist treatment.
	I argue that it's not clear that quasi-realism has successfully replied to error theory. Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard have both, in response to evolutionary debunking arguments, argued that the type of realism quasi-realism "echoes" is a form of tempered realism.
	This reply, however, suggests that the quasi-realist is not responding to the error theorist at all. She is simply echoing a form of tempered moral realism. In other words, the concepts she is trying to explain are tempered, but Mackie did not argue against a tempered realism. If this is so, we may worry about two things: 1. Is there motivation for quasi-realism if it's not a response to error theory? And 2.Why not simply be a realist instead?
	I'll answer both questions in my paper and argue that the version of quasi-realism I defend – ideal quasi-realism - directly responds to error theory. I focus on one aspect of robust realism which Mackie rejects: the demanding authority of morality. I explain how the ideal quasi-realist can accommodate this robust feature of our ethical discourse. In doing so, I renew the motivation and need for quasi-realism, and I show that we don't have to fall foul of error theory.
December 14 2020	**Sara Bernstein, University of Notre Dame** Chair: Cara Nine
	Ways of Non-Being
	Ontological pluralism is the view that there is more than one fundamental way of being. This talk develops and defends *ontological pluralism about non-being*, the idea that non-being can be further divided into more fundamental categories. After drawing out the relationship between pluralism about being and pluralism about non-being, I discuss quantificational strategies for the pluralist about non-being. I examine historical precedent for the view. Finally, I suggest that pluralism about non-being has explanatory power across a variety of domains, and that the view can account for differences between nonexistent past and future times, between omissions and absences, and between different kinds of fictional objects.