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Abstracts

Intention and Slurring

Chris Cousens

La Trobe

In contemporary discussion of slurring speech, there are some common-sense defences of slurring that seem, at least on the surface, plausibly successful. However, if the harm in slurring is understood not as causing offence, but as an act of oppression, the most obvious defences must fail. Even if the speaker does not intend to oppress, or cause any other harm, they should still be held accountable for their harmful speech.

Pavlovian Queer: the Curious Case of Dr Neil McConaghy

Kate Davison

University of Melbourne

From 1962-1973 Dr Neil McConaghy was the leading Australian practitioner of aversion therapy in the treatment of homosexuality. McConaghy situated himself in the middle ranges of the Kinsey scale. He also considered himself a Marxist and was heavily influenced by the work of Russian physician Pavlov. McConaghy developed an interest in using behaviour modification to "help" homosexual men and women after he was inspired by the work of Czechoslovakian psychiatrist, Dr Kurt Freund. This curious case demonstrates the unexpected reaches of Soviet psychiatric influences and how the political sympathies of individual psychiatrists had unexpected outcomes.

Going beyond reductivism and defence in just war theory

Nick Evans

University of Melbourne

So called just war reductivists assume that war is relative to ordinary interpersonal interaction a morally unexceptional state of affairs. It follows from this view that killing in war is subject to the same constraints that ordinary self/other defence is. In other words, war is an in-kind extension of self/other defence. I argue that there is a serious objection to reductivism that so far has received much less attention than other objections have. I argue that this objection which concerns the roles of institutions and how they regulate violence harms most forms of reductivism but not all. However once applied, it brings into focus another issue that drives to the heart of reductivism. My aim is not entirely negative though. Once we bring institutions into focus, we begin to see that there is another form of justificatory violence (besides defence) which can help us develop a more expansive conception of just war theory without relying on the reductivist route.

Is Predication a Reliable Test of Definition?

Giles Field

Deakin University

There is a widespread assumption that definitions, if used as predicates, can only be successfully used for subjects that fit that same definition. I aim to show that a plausible reading of Aristotle tells us definitions, as well as being used as essential predicates, can be also used as accidental predicates. I suggest, however, that unlike being essentially predicated, when a subject is accidentally predicated by a definition it is an unreliable test of that definition. This leads to some counter-intuitive results where definitions can be successfully used as predicates for subjects that do not fit that definition. I will propose several definitions to illustrate this observation and attempt to anticipate obvious objections.

Recognising uptake: Kukla vs. Langton on sexual refusal

Rebecca Harrison & Kai Tanter

University of Melbourne

Rebecca Kukla presents a theory of the phenomenon of discursive injustice which rivals Rae Langton's account of illocutionary silencing. We will first argue that Kuklas theory, particularly her conception of the role of uptake in constituting speech acts, has some distinctive advantages over Langtons. Then we will discuss an objection which has been leveled against Langtons theory that it cant account for unrecognised acts of refusal, such as those which occur in acts of sexual violence. Prima facie, it appears that this objection will pose even more of a problem for Kuklas account of speech acts. We will argue that Kukla has the resources to respond to this objection and that rather than being a problem for Kukla, it highlights the strengths of her account of uptake.

Controversial Discussion Topics for Philosophy in Schools

Ben Kilby

University of Melbourne

This paper seeks to understand how we should we handle controversial topics during philosophy sessions with children. Philosophy with Children demands open and free inquiry, but some commentators have suggested that certain topics or ideas should be censored. This creates a tension between free thought and protecting children. This paper will work through three examples of controversial topics for children in an attempt to clarify the limits of discussion in Philosophy for Children classes, and how practitioners can manage censorious reactions to these discussions.

Justifying meat: Why eating meat seems so easy to justify

Lucy Mayne

Monash University

Most people think it morally wrong to inflict suffering on animals, at least without strong justification. Most people also eat meat and have few or no compunctions about the morality of either their own meat eating or the broader practice of raising and killing animals for meat. Given mainstream practices in animal agriculture, there is a tension between these two positions. I will first examine the justifications people commonly employ in support of meat eating, and show that they either rest on demonstrably false beliefs or are employed in an ad hoc way that presupposes the moral acceptability of meat eating. I will then argue that despite their philosophical weakness, such justifications, along with a number of implicitly employed distancing strategies, nevertheless serve to mitigate the cognitive dissonance that arises due to this tension, and that the normalcy of meat eating enables this mitigative function.

Why the Success Condition is not substantively redundant in Just War Theory

Kieran McInerney

University of Melbourne

The purpose of my presentation is to shed some light on the interrelationship between the *jus ad bellum* Proportionality and Reasonably Probability of Success criteria. This inquiry is motivated by recent assertions in Just War Theory literature that the requirement of a Reasonable Probability of Success is substantively redundant because it does not offer a contribution independent of the Proportionality criterion. I will begin by analysing the function and application of the Proportionality criterion, and some common ways that it has been interpreted. This will take the form of an overview of the various elements typically proposed to warrant consideration when assessing whether a decision to wage war satisfies this requirement.

I will then highlight why one of these elements, an estimation of the probability that the harms that constitute one's Just Cause will be averted, has been taken to render the requirement of a Reasonable Probability of Success superfluous. I will argue that given the widely acknowledged difficulty in applying the Proportionality criterion, such an estimation ought not constitute part of an assessment of whether this criterion is satisfied. Judgments of whether the Proportionality criterion is satisfied ought to only consider the created evil and resisted evil of a war assuming that war is successful

Social Concepts: Essential Contestability and Normative Structure

Paul-Mikhail Podosky
University of Melbourne

Why haven't we uncovered necessary and sufficient conditions for social concepts such as race and gender? This clearly isn't from a lack of trying; nor is it because we've been unlucky. Instead, it is because social concepts have distinctive normative structure. Following MacIntyre (1973), I maintain that (some) social concepts are essentially contestable. That is, the criteria for applying social concepts do not form a finite and determinate set of necessary and sufficient conditions; and more than this, we fail to have a grip on what counts as normal conditions in the areas of social life corresponding to these concepts. Why? For MacIntyre, this is because social particulars have a say in their own definition. Contrary to this, I argue that we can explain contestability by looking at the structure of social concepts themselves: Our evaluation of social concepts is constrained by ethical and political standards. However, given a lack of widespread agreement as to what counts as ethically and politically right, conceptual stability is only practically secured.

Rawls, reasonableness, and conscientious objection in health care

Xavier Symons
Australian Catholic University

Much ink has been spilt in recent years over the controversial topic of conscientious objection in health care. In particular, commentators have proposed various ways with which we might adjudicate between legitimate conscience claims and those that are poorly reasoned or based on prejudice. Several commentators have considered whether a notion of reasonableness can be employed to provide us with a way of assessing the validity of conscience claims. If we adopt a particular standard of reasonableness, it is argued, we can decide what cases of conscientious objection we should permit and what cases we should restrict. In the first section of this paper, I discuss John Rawls' conception of reasonableness and reasonable disagreement. Rawls famously argued that the State needs to respect the reasonable

disagreement that characterises policy debate in liberal democracies. He believed that policy should be based on points of overlapping consensus in the fundamental values of reasonable political agents. I discuss Rawls view that law and public policy should respect the diversity of views about morality and human life present in a pluralist society. In the second section of this paper, I consider how a broadly Rawlsian framework might allow us with a way of adjudicating between competing conscience claims in health care. I argue that Rawlsian principles can be invoked to justify at least a limited right to conscientious objection.

Inferentialist semantics for atomics, predicates, and names

Kai Tanter

University of Melbourne

In this talk I draw Brandoms idea of material inference [1, 2] and Greg Restalls bilateralist interpretation of the multiple conclusion sequent calculus [3, 4], to give a compositional proof-theoretic semantics for atomic sentences and their component names and predicates. Based on Brandoms ideas I set out general rule forms for atomic sentences, predicates, and names within the multiple conclusion sequent calculus. This system has several interesting features: (1) the rules for atomic sentences are determined by those for their component predicates and names; (2) cut elimination for the system can be proved; (3) model theoretic extensions can be interpreted as idealisations derived from the more fundamental inference rules.

Imperative Inference without Truth: an immodest proposal for the meaning of imperatives

Kai Tanter

University of Melbourne

Interest in the semantics and logic of imperatives has recently been revived in philosophy and linguistics (e.g Charlow 2014, von Fintel & Iatridou 2017). One divide in the current literature is over the extent to which we need to revise existing semantic theories in order to accommodate imperatives, particularly around whether imperatives express propositions. Imperative content not being propositional would appear to present a problem for standard truth-conditional theories of meaning but less so for use-theories such as inferentialism. In this talk I will sketch an inferentialist theory of imperatives, drawing on Rosja Mastops non-propositional update semantics for imperatives (2005, 2011) and generalising Greg Restalls reading of inferential norms in terms of in/coherencies between assertions and denials (2005). A consequence of this theory is that we give up the common view that all semantic content is propositional and instead acknowledge several different sentence level content types.

Does Interest-Relative Invariantism Undermine Itself?

William Tuckwell

University of Melbourne

Traditionally, epistemologists have thought that only truth directed things, e.g. evidence, clear and distinct perception, and reliable belief forming processes, can make a difference to whether and what we know. More recently, contrary to epistemological orthodoxy, some philosophers have argued that practical matters also have a role to play in determining whether and what we know. One version of this view is interest-relative invariantism (IRI hereafter) which claims that whether or not S knows that p depends in part on facts about Ss practical circumstances (Stanley 2005: 85). In this paper I will develop an objection to IRI, namely, the self-undermining objection. Making the self-undermining objection will require me to defend two claims: (1) if IRI is true then it applies to itself, and; (2) IRI is a high stakes proposition in that if IRI is false, then believing and acting as if it were true will result the perpetration of what Miranda Fricker has termed testimonial injustice (2007). Taken together, I argue, these two claims can make it harder for proponents of IRI to have knowledge of their own theory.
