

The Possibility of Metaphysics

Between Inductive, Analytic,
and Transcendental Arguments

January 31 - February 1, 2019

University of Duesseldorf

Schloss Mickeln (Alt Himmelgeist 25)

WORKSHOP SPEAKERS

Sophie Allen (Keele)

Matti Eklund (Uppsala)

Kristina Engelhard (Dortmund)

Brigitte Falkenburg (Dortmund)

Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla (DCLPS)

Cord Friebe (Siegen)

Gabriele Gava (Frankfurt)

Thomas Hofweber (North Carolina)

Holger Lyre (Magdeburg)

Barbara Vetter (Berlin)

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Workshop Details

- Date: January 31 – February 1, 2019
- Venue: Schloss Mickeln (Alt-Himmelgeist 25, 40589 Düsseldorf)
- Funding: German Research Foundation (DFG), research unit: *Inductive Metaphysics* FOR 2495. The goal of the research unit is to establish how empirical sources and inductive forms of inference play a role in metaphysical research.
- Organisation: Kristina Engelhard (University of Technology Dortmund) & Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla (DCLPS, University of Duesseldorf) & Alexander Gebharder (University of Groningen)
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Speakers

- Sophie Allen (Keele University)
- Matti Eklund (University of Uppsala)
- Kristina Engelhard (University of Technology Dortmund)
- Brigitte Falkenburg (University of Technology Dortmund)
- Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla (DCLPS, Univ. of Duesseldorf)
- Cord Friebe (University of Siegen)
- Gabriele Gava (University of Frankfurt)
- Thomas Hofweber (The University of North Carolina)
- Holger Lyre (University of Magdeburg)
- Barbara Vetter (FU Berlin)

Description

 In the last century, metaphysics in the traditional sense became subject of radical scepticism. One strategy to save metaphysics from sceptical doubts is bringing metaphysical investigation closer to scientific practice. This workshop is intended to explore the Kantian question whether metaphysics is possible as a “science”, and if so, whether it can or should be conducted on the basis of scientific methods and findings or whether it can still be justified as an aprioristic enterprise. A Kantian strategy to counter scepticism is the use of transcendental arguments. Questions of particular interest are – among others – the following ones: How can metaphysics be justified? Is metaphysics an aprioristic discipline or should it be pursued on the basis of scientific findings or argumentative methods used in the sciences such as induction and abduction? How do transcendental arguments relate to inferences made in the sciences? What is their relevance for modern metaphysical approaches such as naturalised metaphysics or the Canberra plan? Which role do empirical data and empirical methods play in contemporary metaphysics and can their use in metaphysics be justified?

Schedule Day 1

Thursday, January 31, 2019:

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|-------------|---|
| 10:00–10:15 | Opening |
| 10:15–11:15 | Matti Eklund: <i>Alien Structure</i> |
| 11:15–11:30 | Coffee Break |
| 11:30–12:30 | Kristina Engelhard: <i>Metaphysics as Modelling in Kant</i> |
| 12:30–14:30 | Lunch Break |
| 14:30–15:30 | Cord Friebe: <i>Kant's Lightweight Ontological Realism</i> |
| 15:30–15:45 | Coffee Break |
| 15:45–16:45 | Sophie Allen: <i>Is there Really any Order?</i> |
| 16:45–17:00 | Coffee Break |
| 17:00–18:00 | Thomas Hofweber: <i>Inescapable Concepts</i> |
| 19:00– | Dinner |

Schedule Day 2


Friday, February 1, 2019:

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| 10:15–11:15 | Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla: <i>Abduction and Transcendental Deduction</i> |
| 11:15–11:30 | Coffee Break |
| 11:30–12:30 | Gabriele Gava: <i>Kant, the Third Antinomy and Transcendental Arguments</i> |
| 12:30–14:30 | Lunch Break |
| 14:30–15:30 | Brigitte Falkenburg: <i>Kant's Experiment of Pure Reason</i> |
| 15:30–15:45 | Coffee Break |
| 15:45–16:45 | Holger Lyre: <i>Structural Metaphysics and Mental Representation</i> |
| 16:45–17:00 | Coffee Break |
| 17:00–18:00 | Barbara Vetter: <i>The Many Kinds of Metaphysical Modality</i> |
| 19:00– | Dinner |

Abstracts

Sophie Allen:


Is there Really any Order?

hile recent discussions in metametaphysics have concentrated on the methods and evidence available to formulate specific metaphysical theories, and whether they can be used to justify one metaphysical theory rather than another, the aim of this paper is to consider more general ontological claims. In particular, I examine the status of a general principle which is often presupposed in metaphysics, both by realist property theories and by most accounts of causality: that there is, objectively speaking, order in nature. This order could be determined either by the existence of qualitative order – the existence of qualitative ‘joints’ in nature – by nomological order, or by a combination of both. But the specifics of these options will not be of great concern; of greater interest is whether we have a good reason for thinking that there is any objective order at all. I investigate some abductive and transcendental arguments presented in favour of this principle which would permit a realist interpretation of a range of metaphysical theories.



Matti Eklund:

Alien Structure

n contemporary metaphysics there is a lively debate over what it means to be elite (natural, structural, . . .) and about which kinds of individuals, properties, relations, etc. are elite. There is also a parallel issue of what the language in which the “book of the world” is written is like. But maybe the world’s structure is really alien? Maybe no individuals or properties are elite, and the language of the book of the world contains to predicates or quantifiers or singular terms. Generally: the elite entities do not belong to familiar ontological categories, and the expressions of the elite language do not belong to familiar linguistic categories. In this talk, I address some of the issues that come up when we try to confront these questions.

Kristina Engelhard:

Metaphysics as Modelling in Kant

According to some contemporary thinkers, at least a main task of metaphysics is – like in the sciences – model building (Paul 2012, Williamson 2017). In my talk I want to show first that it is adequate to take Kant to subscribe to this thesis, second how he arrives at this thought and third what model building means for Kant. My example will be Kant’s theory of matter’s fundamental structure. However, according to Kant, metaphysics comes at a cost: Kant believes that the metaphysics of the material world is necessarily bound to the illusionary thesis of transcendental realism, the thesis that appearances are things in themselves which leads to fallacies, if it is not constrained. Transcendental realism is necessary for thinking that our metaphysical models deal with the world at all and are not a mere projection of our cognitive capacities. And yet metaphysics is inevitable because it is a natural disposition of intellectual beings like us and its manifestation is necessary for our intellectual scientific enterprises. This interpretation is contrary to the common interpretation of the outcome of Kant’s critique of traditional metaphysics holding that Kant’s view is that there is a “cleaned” critical metaphysics of nature without transcendental realism.



Brigitte Falkenburg:

Kant’s Experiment of Pure Reason

In the preface to the 2nd edition of the “Critique of Pure Reason”, Kant attempts to support transcendental idealism by a thought experiment, the experiment of pure reason. According to it, the antinomy of pure reason is a touchstone for the (un)tenability of transcendental realism. The experiment of pure reason comes together with an analogy between the “transcendental dialectic” of the “Critique of Pure Reason” and the synthetic procedure of chemistry. In my talk, I will reconstruct the experiment of pure reason as a transcendental argument in favour of transcendental idealism and discuss its conclusiveness against the background of the analogy, the analytic-synthetic method of Newtonian science.

Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla:
Transcendental Deduction as Abduction

Some form of abduction consists in an inference to the best explanation. Transcendental deduction, on the other hand, is sometimes described as an inference to the only possible explanation. If there is only one possible explanation, then, for trivial reasons, it is also the best explanation. Such a link between both forms of inferences was stressed by interpreting transcendental deduction as a form of abduction (cf. Rosenberg 1975 and Vahid 2006), but also by reconstructing pragmatist abduction as a form of transcendental deduction (cf. Apel 1981 and Gava 2008). The former approach brings a pragmatist interpretation of transcendentalism with it, whereas the latter provides a transcendentalist interpretation of pragmatist abduction. In this talk, we take up the approach of framing transcendental deduction as a form of abduction. However, we also relate our approach to a truth-apt reduction of the pragmatic factors in abductive inferences. This allows us to frame transcendental abductions as abduction with no pragmatist flavour.




Cord Friebe:
Kant's Lightweight Ontological Realism

In this talk, I will firstly argue that Kant's idealism of space and time implies an ontological realism of spatiotemporal objects that is deflationary or lightweight in character. Thus, I will argue that Kant's "critical" metaphysics still is a moderate version of metaphysics from a contemporary perspective. Then, I will discuss Kant's rejection of Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles, as a case study of his ontology of appearances. A comparison with contemporary views surrounding Leibniz's principle shows that such views are "dogmatic", i.e. heavyweight ontological realisms. Finally, I will sketch how this reasoning may work concerning the debate about laws of nature.

Gabriele Gava:


Kant, the Third Antinomy and Transcendental Arguments

 In this paper I consider whether a reading of Kant's solution to the Third Antinomy can offer material for devising a new model of transcendental argument. The problem that this form of argument is meant to address is an antinomy between two apparently contradictory claims, q and $\neg q$, where we seem equally justified in holding both. The model has the following form: p ; q is a necessary condition of p ; the only justification we have for q is that it is a necessary condition of p ; p is justified only in domain X (where X is a domain of objects of cognition); therefore, q is justified only in domain X . Since the argument shows that our justification for q is valid only in X , it also establishes that there is conceptual space to hold $\neg q$ outside of X .



Thomas Hofweber:

Inescapable Concepts

 will suggest that focusing on a certain class of concepts, inescapable concepts, one can defend a broadly Neo-Kantian approach to metaphysics, without the use of transcendental arguments. Instead of thinking of such concepts as imposing philosophical limits, and binding us to thinking in a particular way, we should conceive of them as revealing not only how we must think reality is, but furthermore what reality must be like.

Holger Lyre:

Structural Metaphysics and Mental Representation

Structural realism has been advocated as a structural metaphysics tailor-made for modern physics. The idea of structural representation, on the other hand, has seen a revival in the debate about the nature of mental representations within recent times. In my talk I want to explore the rarely considered connections between the two views. Along the way I will distinguish different levels of structuralism (property, relational and logical structuralism). I try to illuminate their relationship to the metaphysical controversies about quiddities, the Newman problem and Russellian monism, and discuss whether and in which sense the concept of structural representation can help to shed new light in these metaphysical issues.



Barbara Vetter:

The Many Kinds of Metaphysical Modality

Metaphysical modality is one of philosophy's most central theoretical terms. But what are we talking about when we are talking about metaphysical modality? And which independent grounds might we have for judging a theory of metaphysical modality? I argue that there are different routes to a concept of metaphysical modality, and that there is no guarantee that they will converge – so metaphysicians of modality may well be systematically talking past each other.