

Conference Report: SOPhiA 2017



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This year's *Salzburg Conference for Young Analytic Philosophy* (SOPhiA: *Salzburgiense Concilium Omnibus Philosophis Analyticis*) took place from September 13 to 15 at the University of Salzburg, Austria. More than 140 philosophers from 19 different countries participated in the conference with about 120 talks. Thereof about 80 papers have been contributed mainly by students and PhD students, who gave their talks in English or German. There also have been 5 satellite workshops and four plenary lectures. The latter ones are *Why Language Matters for Self-Awareness: The Conceptual and the Narrative Route* by Johannes Brandl (University of Salzburg), *Free Will as a Higher-Level Phenomenon* by Christian List (London School of Economics), *What is Perspectival Pluralism* by Michela Massimi (University of Edinburgh) and *Laws and Powers in the Frame of Nature* by Stathis Psillos.

The main topics of the conference have been *Metaphysics and Ontology*, *Philosophy of Science*, *Ethics*, each with 4 sections with each approximately 4 contributed talks. *Epistemology* and *Philosophy of Mind* had 3, *Philosophy of Language* had one section. There also have been other small sections with about 3 to 4 talks. Those sections were on *Logic and Philosophy of Mathematics*, *Action Theory*, *History of Philosophy*, *Political Philosophy*, as well as *Philosophy of Law*.

The conference began on Wednesday with five parallel satellite workshops. The first workshop was *Probabilistic Approaches to (Prototype) Concepts*, organized by Annika Schuster and Corina Strößner (both from the *Duesseldorf Center for Logic and Philosophy of Science*, University of Düsseldorf). The second workshop *Grounding in and after Bolzano* was organized by Jan Claas (University of Hamburg) and Antje Rumberg (University of Konstanz). The third satellite workshop has been organized by Florian Boge (University of Wuppertal) and was entitled *Modeling Physical Reality*. *The Power to Change: Dispositions and Persistence* was the fourth workshop and its organizers were Florian Fischer (University of Bonn) and Thorben Petersen (University of Bremen). Finally, the last one was *Values in Science: Perspectives from*

Philosophy of Science, Ethics, and Language Philosophy; it was organized by Frauke Albersmeier and Alexander Christian (both from the University of Düsseldorf). These workshops were followed by a short ceremony where the winner of this year's *SOPhiA Best Paper Award* was announced: Nina Retzlaff (University of Düsseldorf) received the award for her paper *Another Counterexample to Markov Causation from Quantum Mechanics: Single Photon Experiments and the Mach-Zehnder Interferometer*.

This event was followed by the first plenary lecture given by Stathis Psillos from the University of Athens. It was entitled *Laws and Powers in the Frame of Nature*. Psillos introduced the contemporary debate in metaphysics of science, led by Neo-Humeans and Neo-Aristotelians about natural laws and powers. The discussion is about the question whether laws and powers are naturally necessary, fundamental or real at all. After comparing the views of structuralism, primitivism, dispositional essentialism and dispositionalism, he brings in a Newtonian argument to conclude that introducing a power is actually introducing a law, which means that powers and laws come together in the frame of nature.

After this lecture two of the previous workshops continued, and the following three slots with each 4 talks started: *Epistemology, Philosophy of Science*, and *Ethics*. The first day of the conference ended with a warm evening buffet.

The second conference day began with the plenary talk given by Michela Massimi on *What Is Perspectival Pluralism?*. This talk was about the pluralism in philosophy of science, which is (roughly) the view that we can form plural diverse views about what nature is like, and do not have to stick to one theory to explain all phenomena. Perspectival pluralism comes in different variations, which were discussed by Massimi in order to present her favoured view, its advantages as well as its problems.

Afterward talks in *Metaphysics and Ontology, Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology, Ethics, History Of Philosophy* as well as *Philosophy of Science* were given. In the late afternoon Johannes L. Brandl gave the third plenary talk: *Why Language Matters for Self-Awareness: The Conceptual and the Narrative Route*. He dealt with two ways of understanding self-awareness, i.e. knowledge about our own (mental) states: The conceptual route can be considered as the classical path of using the first-person pronoun in language when talking about oneself to acquire a self-concept. The rival position is the narrative route in which we tell

stories about people, and see ourselves as protagonists of stories, in order to get a self-concept. Brandl argued for the latter theory by criticizing the conceptual route to have no answer to the question how a linguistic self-concept differs from [...] self-notion that may be constructed without employing linguistic means. He proposed that the alternative route can be maintained without buying in implausible consequences.

The last day of SOPhiA 2017 started with parallel talks on *Metaphysics and Ontology, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Science, Ethics, Logic and Philosophy of Mathematics, Action Theory, Political Philosophy* as well as *Philosophy of Law*.

In the afternoon the last plenary lecture *Free Will as a Higher-Level Phenomenon* was given by Christian List. List argued that free will is compatible with determinism if one understands it as a higher-level phenomenon. The reason for this is basically that determinism on the fundamental physical level does, given supervenience and multiple realizability of higher-level phenomena, does not imply determinism on the agential level at which deliberation and decision making occur.

The last day of the SOPhiA 2017 conference ended with a closing dinner in a local restaurant.

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