

Conference Report: SOPhiA 2019



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The tenth edition of *The Salzburg Conference for Young Analytic Philosophy 2019* (SOPhiA; *Salzburgiense Concilium Omnibus Philosophis Analyticis*) took place from September 18 to 20 at the University of Salzburg, Austria.

150 philosophers from 23 different countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, United Kingdom, and USA) took part in the conference. The number of talks was about 125 and, as in the previous years, they have been mostly given by PhD and Master Students. The majority of the talks were in English and a small minority in German. Furthermore, there have been three plenary lectures (one of them sponsored by the publishing house *Metzler*), and four affiliated workshops. The titles of the affiliated workshops were: “*Mindless Explanations? The Causal and Explanatory Role of Mental States*”, “*Philosophy of Aging: Theoretical and Practical Aspects*”, “*Responsibility and Agency*” and “*Time.Image*”.

A multitude of areas belonging to the analytic philosophical tradition were covered during the whole event. More specifically, the conference was divided into sections explicitly related to different philosophical subdisciplines such as *Epistemology*, *Metaphysics and Ontology*, *Ethics*, *Philosophy of Science*, *Philosophy of Language*, *Logic and Philosophy of Mathematics*, *History of Philosophy* and *Philosophy of Mind*. The conference started with the announcement for the *Best Paper Award*. The winner was Marco Hausmann (University of Munich) with his paper “*The Consequence of the Consequence Argument*”.

The opening was immediately followed by the first plenary talk given by Hilary Greaves (University of Oxford). The title of the talk was: “*Distributional Weights in Cost-Benefit Analysis*”. Greaves discussed and compared two main approaches that play important roles in the development of potential government projects that involve both benefits and costs for a group of individuals. Generally, a possible project would

on balance benefit a group of people, and would on balance harm another one. At this point, the problem that automatically emerges is to understand how benefits/costs are aggregated across people. Theorists generally disagree on how this aggregation should be performed. Some argue that such aggregation needs to be *unweighted*, because, so they argue, it suffices to sum individuals' willingness to pay (in monetary terms) to have a project go ahead. In contrast, defenders of the *weighted approach* argue that a project should go ahead depending on whether the benefit or cost of a fixed size (also in monetary terms) counts for more when it accrues to a poor than to a rich person. Many philosophers seem to consider the weighted approach as the correct one. Greaves discussed sources of opposition to this consensus coming both from governmental and private actors. More particularly, she analysed cases where projects that seem to pass a *cost-benefit analysis test* actually reduced social welfare.

The first day of the conference had six parallel sessions (each slot included between six and eight talks) explicitly related to the areas of *Epistemology, Metaphysics and Ontology, Ethics, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Science, and Logic and Philosophy of Mathematics*. The day ended with a get together in form of a warm evening buffet.

On the second day, the sections dedicated to *Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Language* and *Logic and Philosophy of Mathematics* were substituted by the ones related to the areas of *History of Philosophy* and *Philosophy of Mind*. One whole slot was fully occupied by the affiliated workshop “*Mindless Explanations? The Causal and Explanatory Role of Mental States*”. The other sections remained unchanged.

In the afternoon, Philip Kitcher (Columbia University) held a plenary lecture entitled “*Pragmatism, Truth, and Progress*”. Roughly, Kitcher tried to shed light on and reconcile two different approaches to the notion of truth: Pragmatism and Tarski's formal account. In Kitcher's investigation the notion of progress (seen under pragmatist lenses in the sense of allowing for solving problems) played a central role. In his view, truth emerges as you solve problems. Potential truths remain as such and improve their qualifications the longer they remain effective in problem-solving. Kitcher also discussed how his approach can become useful in clarifying the idea of correspondence between representations and the world.

After the plenary, the conference hosted a *Session: Open Access Publishing – Info and Discussion*. On this occasion, Christoph Schirmer, senior commissioning editor at the publishing house *De Gruyter* gave

a short introduction into current developments in scholarly publishing. The introduction was followed by Q&A and a vivid discussion.

The remainder of the day was assigned to the previously mentioned workshops. The workshop “*Mindless Explanations? The Causal and Explanatory Role of Mental States*” featured talks of Margit Scheibel (University of Duesseldorf), Maria Sekatskaya (University of Duesseldorf), David Hommen (University of Duesseldorf) and Alexander Gebharter (University of Groningen). The workshop “*Time.Image*” featured talks of Sarah Kolb (University of Vienna/Linz), Vivien Grabowski (University of Cologne), Maximilian Lehner (University of Linz), and Eva Kernbauer (University of Vienna). The speakers of the workshop “*Philosophy of Aging: Theoretical and Practical Aspects*” were Cristian Saborido (University of Madrid), Pablo García-Barranquero (University of Málaga), Michael Breitenbach (University of Salzburg), Mark Rinnerthaler (University of Salzburg), Stefano Giaimo (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology), Günter Lepperdinger (University of Salzburg), Gregor Greslehner (CNRS), and Maël Lemoine (University of Bordeaux). The workshop “*Responsibility and Agency*” featured talks of Hannah Altehenger (Bielefeld University), Sofia Bonicalzi (LMU Munich), Leonhard Menges (University of Salzburg), and Jan-Willem Wieland (University of Amsterdam).

The third day started with the same sessions as the day before (with the only difference that the slot dedicated to *Metaphysics and Ontology* began in the early evening instead of the morning). In the afternoon, participants had the chance to listen to Hannes Leitgeb, editor in chief of the *Springer* journal *Erkenntnis*. His talk aimed at explaining and elucidating the academic publication processes for early-career scholars or, more generally, to participants with less experience in publishing and collaborating with academic journals. Afterward, the parallel talks proceeded without impediments until in the evening the *Metzler Lecture* was given by Hannes Leitgeb (MCMP, LMU Munich). The title of his talk was: “*On Merely Expressive Devices*”. As the title suggests, Leitgeb developed a new semantics for merely expressive devices (linguistic expressions that can help in expressing or grasping a thought without influencing the truth conditions of the propositions expressed themselves). Roughly, Leitgeb argued that his approach to semantics can throw light on different current philosophical debates in philosophy of language, logic and metaphysics.

The conference ended with a closing dinner. The conference was supported by: *KRITERION – Journal of Philosophy, Land Salzburg, Men-*

tis, J. B. Metzler, Springer, De Gruyter, Stadt Salzburg, Oeh-Salzburg, Oesterreichische Gesellschaft für Philosophie (OeGP), and the University of Salzburg. The members of the organizing committee were: Albert J. J. Anglberger, Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla, Alexander Gebharter, Gregor Greslehner, Markus Hierl, Sebastian Krempelmeier, Stephen Müller, Raimund Pils, Stefanie Orter and Sebastian Sattlecker.

Further information about *SOPhiA 2019* is available at: <https://www.sbg.ac.at/sophia/SOPhiA/2019/languages/en/index.php>

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