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Filozofska fakulteta



Department of Philosophy,
Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor
&
Slovenian Society for Analytic Philosophy
and Philosophy of Science

**Mednarodna konferenca
Med metafiziko in etiko:
filozofska zapuščina Dereka Parfita**

**International Conference
Between Metaphysics and Ethics:
homage à Derek Parfit**

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**Med metafiziko in etiko: filozofska zapuščina Dereka Parfita / Between Metaphysics and Ethics:
Homage à Derek Parfit.**

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Program/Programme

Torek/Tuesday 12.12.2017

Prostor/Room 2.20

- 11.00-11.45 Matjaž Potrč (University of Ljubljana): Requiring and Favouring Reasons
- 11.45-12.30 Santiago Truccone Borgogno (University of Graz): The Comparability of Harm: An Interpretation of the Disjunctive Notion of Harm
- 12.30-12.45 Odmor/Break
- 12.45-13.30 Marko Jurjako (University of Rijeka): Normative Reason and Robust Objectivity: Revisiting Evolutionary Considerations
- 13.30-14.30 Kosilo/ Lunch
- 14.30-15.15 Kian Mintz-Woo (University of Graz): Against Philosophers Killing People (in Thought Experiments)
- 15.15-16.00 Nenad Miščević (University of Maribor & CEU Budapest): The Path to What Matters: Parfit's Thought Experiments
- 16.00-16.30 Odmor za kavo/Cofee Break
- 16.30-17.15 Danilo Šuster (University of Maribor): Empty Questions, Profound Answers – Parfit on the Unimportance of Identity
- 17.15-18.00 Friderik Klampfer (University of Maribor): Parfit's Prioritarianism, Aggregation and the Separateness-of-Persons Objection

Abstracts

Normative Reason and Robust Objectivity: Revisiting Evolutionary Considerations

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The common assumption of evolutionary debunking arguments plausibly involves the idea that some evolutionary story can be adduced that explains why many of our deeply held normative judgments came about and what the mechanisms for their retention are. Derek Parfit, in the second volume of his *On What Matters* defends robust normative objectivism by challenging the plausibility of the common assumption that evolutionary accounts can provide explanations of the existence of normative judgments with particular contents. In this paper, I defend the common presupposition of the evolutionary debunking arguments against Parfit's objections. In particular, I examine some recent accounts from evolutionary psychology and anthropology that can be used to explain important features of our normative judgments.

Parfit's Prioritarianism, Aggregation and the Separateness-of-Persons Objection

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Prioritarianism, the view that the worse the life of an individual who could receive a certain benefit, the better the world in which that individual receives that benefit (other things being equal) has attracted both praise and criticism since Derek Parfit first formulated and defended it in a series of papers, beginning in the 1990s. (Parfit 1991, 1997 and 2012) While some considered prioritarianism a promising alternative to the two opposed extremes, utilitarianism and pure, or radical, egalitarianism, others dismissed it as a view which, once fully unpacked and made sufficiently precise, collapses into one or the other of its theoretical rivals, and as such inherits their main shortcomings.

In the paper, I deal with one such complaint that was first issued by Otsuka & Voerhoeve in 2009 and later restated and refined by Otsuka in 2012. According to this objection, the Parfit-type Prioritarianism, while it favours outcomes that are somewhat sensitive to the distribution of benefits among individuals and not simply to their aggregate size, nevertheless fails John Rawls' Separateness-of-Persons test – for it continues to allow for aggregations of well-being across individuals that don't treat persons as (separate) persons. I begin by trying to make sense of this charge and then set to evaluate its merits. Does Parfit-type Prioritarianism violate the principle of the Separateness of Persons, and if so, should we (or should Parfit) care? I argue for a doubly negative answer – under some interpretations of the aforementioned principle it does, but thus understood the principle is not really a

valid constraint on correct distributive accounts of well-being; while under other, more plausible readings the initial appearance of collision between the two is not even sustained upon reflection.

Against Philosophers Killing People (in Thought Experiments)

Kian Mintz-Woo, University of Graz (kian.mintz-woo@uni-graz.at)

Perhaps lead by figures like Parfit (1984, 2011, 2017), thought experiments involving death and killing have proliferated in the literature. Some have objected to thought experiment in general (Cappelen 2012, Deutsch 2015) while others have objected to the artificiality of some particular ones (Wood 2011). My objections are different; I give three reasons for removing death from thought experiments to the greatest degree possible (sometimes death is unavoidable, even in thought experiments). These reasons are (1) death is final in a way other harms are not; (2) death is so grave that fine distinctions are more difficult to make; and (3) moral intuitions may influence or be influenced by distinctions which are finer in the case of killing than other serious harms.

The Path to What Matters: Parfit's Thought Experiments

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The paper investigates the methods in Parfit that centrally involve thought experiments (TEs), the Golden Rule TEs and universalization TEs (*On What Matters* V.1, part 3, *Theories*, chapters 12-14). It focuses upon the question how the relevant TEs are performed, and intuitions elicited, i.e. upon capacities and exercises generating intuitions in the TEs. Also, where does the normative content enter the picture, and where does it come from?

The paper answers by concentrating first, upon the stages of TE where the scenario is enacted, and intuition produced, second, upon the later stage where a TE is varied, and intuitions from a range of related TEs are compared (intuitive induction)-very rich and detailed in Parfit. It suggests two mechanisms, first, for the Golden Rule TEs: simulation as one possible method of testing, second, for universalisation-cum-contract TEs: the thinker builds a third-person model of the situation and reasons from it.

Requiring and Favoring Reasons

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One problem with supererogatory acts is that they are *morally good* and that as such they *ought* to be done anyway. This is then the *ought-good tie*. But then this does not seem to be an act beyond one's duties, for it simply and flatly follows one's duties, which goes contrary to supererogatory act defined as not being required. So there seems to be a self-defying nature of supererogatory acts. Acts of kindness escape the ought-good conundrum: they are supererogatory in the sense of going beyond one's duty, without that there would be moral requirement addressed to you to perform that act.

There is the distinction between *reasons* that are there in the background of the mentioned acts. For classical supererogatory acts these are *requiring* reasons, for they are related to matters that you *should* or *ought* to do anyway following the nature of the *goodness* involved into them. The acts of kindness do not have requiring reasons as their support, but just *favoring reasons*. There are reasons in favour of such acts without that there would be requiring reasons in support of this act's direction. Parfit mentions the distinction between *objective and subjective reasons*. For him reasons are facts, so that they are not dependent upon your wishes or desires that would eventually provide motivation for you to act in a certain direction. The reason for you to help her is the fact that she's in distress, not your wish or desire prompting your motivation to help her. So there are *objective* reasons which you should comply to. They are specifying the kind of *oughts* that you should follow, without that you would be necessarily motivated to do so, and in most cases this would go against your immediate desires. Now consider that you have such fact based requiring reason. Given that a milliard of people starve from mal- and undernourishment, and that you have sufficient money resources to go on vacations and to buy yourself some gadgets just for fun, there seems to be an *objective* reason for you to give most of your income to feed them. This *requiring reason* is based on *objective facts* that don't usually motivate you. In order to follow your *objective* reasons you should perhaps first follow your *subjective* survival and decent enough existence supportive reasons. This seems to introduce a kind of conundrum for objective requiring reason follower such as Parfit: on one hand there are the requiring reasons supported oughts, and on the other hand there are subjective reasons immediate requirement as related to the agent himself. Parfit wants you to act on the basis of *objective, ought supported requiring* reasons, so that the act in question would be morally good. But does he do it in the just described manner? The answer is negative. Folks which give away the money to help survive the starving milliard of people on our planet, maybe *think* that they are following *objective facts* based *requiring reasons*. But in reality, they are just performing *acts of kindness* (in respect to the starving population), in a similar manner as I take my auntie to the concert without feeling any obligation to do so. This is still a supererogatory act, but it disguises itself as an act based upon *favoring reasons* and not upon requiring reasons.

Empty Questions, Profound Answers - Parfit on the Unimportance of Identity
Danilo Šuster, University of Maribor (danilo.suster@guest.arnes.si)

In his famous thought experiments Parfit wants to establish the claim that it is an empty question whether or not we have the same person at the end of some bizarre process of transformation. Recently Chalmers (2011) revived a debate on merely verbal disputes in philosophy. Chalmers offers several heuristics for detecting and dealing with verbal disputes and I will try to apply his methods as a method for resolving questions raised by Parfit. My hypothesis will be that what we have is a (substantial) dispute whether identity is a bedrock concept or not.

The Comparability of Harm: An Interpretation of the Disjunctive Notion of Harm
Santiago Truccone Borgogno, University of Graz (santiago.truccone-borgogno@uni-graz.at)

Some philosophers have advocated for the disjunctive notion of harm. The “disjunctive notion” understands as a necessary condition of harming to the disjunction between the actions that cause someone to be in a subthreshold state and the actions that cause someone to be worse off than this person would have been had the action not been carried out. However, such kind of accounts should explain in detail which of these two kinds of harm is worse. In this paper, I will try to provide an answer to this question. My argument will be based on Lukas Meyer’s disjunctive notion of harm. I will claim that harms might be quantitatively and qualitatively different. This distinction allows us to build four criteria to measure the severity of different kind of harms. Having straightforward criteria to know the severity of harms could help us in deciding how we should behave in those cases in which whatever the decision we make we will cause someone to suffer harm.



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