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### **Enacting the new social contract: civil disobedience in Armenia**

In this paper I claim that the notion of constructive disobedience provides a better framework to explain the Armenian Velvet Revolution of 2018 than the four main theoretical models of civil disobedience (religious-spiritual, liberal, democratic, anarchistic).

In the first part I describe the political systems of Armenia before and after the Revolution, and I show that there is substantial institutional change as well as change in the sources of legitimation of the government. The institutional change concerns elections. As for the primary source of the legitimacy of the Armenian government, in the pre-revolutionary period it was the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, while after the Revolution, some democratic and social issues took priority over this conflict.

In the second part I argue that the Revolution should be considered as a case of civil disobedience. Then I discuss the four main theoretical models of civil disobedience in details and show why they cannot adequately explain the Armenian case. The religious-spiritual model (Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King) cannot explain the Armenian case because religiousness and the concept of god play a crucial role in it. The liberal model (John Rawls) cannot explain the Armenian case because it considers civil disobedience as a tool for non-radical transformations in newly just societies. The democratic model (Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas) cannot fully explain the Armenian case because it sees civil disobedience only as a “democracy-enhancing” mechanism, not as “democracy establishing”. The anarchist model cannot explain the Armenian case because it rejects the notion of fidelity to the rule of law as a core principle of civil disobedience.

In the third part I present the idea of constructive civil disobedience, and I show that it is a better framework to explain the Armenian Revolution. The idea of constructive disobedience was suggested by Leslie Green to describe the anti-globalization protests of the 1990s and early 2000s. According to him, these protests should be considered as civil disobedience that aimed to establish the social contract and regulations in such areas or places where the situation is equivalent to the state of nature.

The situation in Armenia before the Revolution cannot be considered as an equivalent to the state of nature because independent Armenia was always a state with a functioning government, including a functioning police and army. Therefore, constructive disobedience as presented by Green cannot fully explain the Armenian case. However, constructive disobedience can also be understood in a broader sense to include the cases when the new social contract is attempted to replace the old social contract.

Constructive disobedience perceived in this broader sense can also apply to the Armenian case. The institutional change and the change in the primary sources of government’s legitimacy have been so radical in Armenia that they can be adequately understood only in terms of the old and the new social contracts. This notion of relation between civil disobedience and the new social contract is precisely the reason why constructive disobedience is the best explanation for the Armenian Revolution.

Social & political philosophy

**Keywords:** Armenian Velvet Revolution, constructive disobedience, theories of civil disobedience, elections, legitimacy

Claudia Gâlgău (KU Leuven)

### **What's the use of Eastern European?**

A pressing problem within the European Union is the exploitation of low-skilled migrant workers, particularly those that are categorized as 'Eastern European'. In this paper, I take a critical analytic approach to the concept of Eastern European. Critical analytic approaches aim to analyse whether particular concepts are useful tools to accomplish particular purposes. I aim to establish whether 'Eastern European' is a useful conceptual tool for two related purposes: Useful for political philosophers to accurately understand and address the most salient factors that amount to a particular type of structural exploitation, and useful for the exploited and their allies to pragmatically solve the exploitation. I argue that for a conceptual tool to be useful for both purposes, it ought to fulfil three criteria: i) The sociopolitical constructionist criterion: to succeed in accurately picking out a power relation that the exploitation depends on. ii) The hermeneutical justice criterion: to serve an understanding of the exploitation that it is in the interest of the exploited and allies to have in order to eradicate it. iii.) The non-derogatory criterion: to not offend the individuals it refers to by being derogatory. I argue that Eastern European as a concept is only partially useful for these purposes. While fulfilling the first criterion, it fails to fulfil the other two. More generally, my paper works out three considerations in finding the right conceptual tools for analysis of social injustice that is also sensitive to intersectionality.

Social & political philosophy, Feminist philosophy / Philosophy of race & gender

**Keywords** applied conceptual engineering, othering, social ontology, structural injustice, hermeneutical injustice

### **The aptness of mom rage**

Mom-rage, a hype term that became popular in the US during the pandemic, is an extreme and uncontrollable kind of anger mothers recognise having, in which the anger is mainly outed towards their children. The anger stems from the feeling of powerlessness, due to the pressure and expectations mothers are under. Often this anger is hidden away, because of the shame around it and thereby the chance that one could be labelled as a 'bad mother'.

This paper analyses mom-rage to be a form of affective injustice and argues that this anger can be aimed towards a more productive goal. First, I evaluate this anger to be counterproductive, since the action tendency are the children and they are the victim of this rage. Second, I analyse that the cause of this anger; this powerlessness, pressure and extreme expectations mothers are under, lies with structural misogyny, which is kept in place because of the distinctive structures in society. Third, I recognise mom-rage as a form of affective injustice, the injustice endured by people in their capacity as affective beings, and analyse what the nature of the affective injustice taking place is through Gallegos' view. He has defined affective injustice and provided a framework offering two fundamental affective goods (2021, 5-11). Gallegos argues that these two are needed to benefit from affective justice; "a state in which each person has the affective goods they are owed" (2021-5). One of these goods is "subjective well-being". Here, I argue that mothers suffer from this since they are suppressed in their emotional life, especially in their anger, and are thereby lacking affective freedom. Affective freedom here, is "the freedom from interference in the pursuit of this subjective well-being, including freedom from circumstances that give rise to emotional distress and negative or unpleasant emotions and moods" (Gallegos, 2021-7).

The second fundamental affective good Gallegos described is "emotional aptness". Here, I argue that mothers suffer from a lack as well, since they are deprived in the freedom to participate in the practices that facilitate emotional aptness and are thereby not allowed to rage against those who actually deserve it. Lastly, seeing as mothers are deprived in both fundamental affective goods, I conclude that mom-rage can become a fitting emotion when taken in a different direction, thereby reaching affective justice. Drawing on Cherry's account of Lordean rage, I argue that mom-rage can be restructured towards the oppressive structures of misogyny (2021,23-24) . Lordean rage is a form of anger Cherry describes that seeks to lift oppression and vows for change (2021,24). Applicable for mothers, because this anger can be turned towards a political, moral and epistemic goal, aiming to change the current situation for the better, thereby lifting oppression, which results in mothers ultimately being able to enjoy affective justice.

Social & political philosophy, Feminist philosophy / Philosophy of race & gender, Philosophy of Mind

**Keywords:** affective injustice, misogyny, emotions, well-being, emotion regulation

Gladys B. Esteve (Ateneo De Naga University)

### **Beyond Choice: An Intersectional Feminist Account of Agency**

Current feminist theories struggle to retain a robust conception of agency. In this paper, I interrogate the notions of “agency” and “choice” in the phenomenon of choice feminism, a popular form of contemporary orientation to feminist politics that believes that the individual choices women make are inherently feminist and thus politically acceptable. Intuitively, choice feminism seems inspiring and positive by invoking ideals of strong individualism, pluralism, and autonomy; however, critics argue, it neglects the whole myriad of structures mired with sexism and gender inequality where the subject and her choices are constructed and thus depoliticized. I argue that while freedom of choice is an important feminist ideal, it is not the sole arbiter of women’s agency, and that contrary to its intentions, it rather becomes a rhetoric of discipline, regulations, and perpetuates sites of oppression. Moreover, choice feminism and its entanglement with neoliberalism turns into a disavowal of feminism as a collective struggle. I forward intersectionality to buttress existing care-based agency and relational autonomy theories; and to examine the constructions of gender relations and heteronormativity, the exclusions arising therefrom, and the way power figures within choice feminism. By viewing agency in an intersectional lens, choice is re-politicized by opening women’s lives and their choices to critique the systemic barriers imposed on the same choices. Choice feminism forecloses a notion of agency that considers the simultaneous and often conflicting axes of oppression. Through intersectionality we can put into question women’s location within multiple hierarchies and power relations formed within. As an account of power attending to particular forms of subjugations and subordinations of women’s intersecting and multiplicative experiences of sexism and racism, it offers a nuanced understanding of power and privilege and the disproportionate harm that is being done to other women. Furthermore, an intersectional framework opens a democratic and coalitional feminist politics which means encouraging expressions and expanding the conditions of possibilities for agency.

Feminist philosophy / Philosophy of race & gender

**Keywords** agency, relational autonomy, choice feminism, intersectionality, neoliberalism

Hassan Ali (University of Memphis)

### **Trans Temporality: Using Deleuze to Modify Stoller's Theory of Gender**

The aim of this essay is to examine accounts of gendered temporality that are specifically oriented towards queer and trans phenomenology. I will begin by analyzing Sylvia Stoller's critique of biologically deterministic female temporality, and then use her critique as a jumping point to introduce queer commentary on gender. Starting with Jack Halberstam's account of 'queer time' as a broader account of queer temporal affect, I will then narrow down into specific accounts of trans affect by Lucas Crawford and Elizabeth Gould, who both use the ontological frameworks of Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze to outline their notions of trans phenomenology. I will ultimately argue that Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'anonymous temporality' cannot fully encapsulate the experience of gendered temporality. The metaphysical structures of Bergson and Deleuze provides us with an account of gendered temporality that is more amenable to queer and trans phenomenology, allowing us to look at gendered temporality as an un-individuated intensity that generates effects that directly combat formations of subjects rather than actualizing them.

Feminist philosophy / Philosophy of race & gender

**Keywords** Gendered temporality; Trans phenomenology; Deleuze; Bergson

### **Call me by my Pronouns - “Genderqueer” as a Hermeneutical Resource**

In this paper, we seek to enrich the understanding of the concept of “hermeneutical resources” in the context of theories on hermeneutical marginalization. We believe that doing so is important in two respects. I) It shows how hermeneutical resources fail to be adopted by dominantly situated subjects. II) Elaborating on the multidimensional nature of hermeneutical resources demonstrates how marginalized subjects are disproportionately burdened with introducing new categories to broader debates.

Broadly conceived, “hermeneutical injustice” denotes the phenomenon of having a “significant area of one’s social experience obscured from collective understanding” (Fricker 2007: 154). It shows how the availability, application and circulation of hermeneutical resources enhances the understanding of certain phenomena, such as “sexual harassment” or “date rape”. Yet, critiques such as Medina (2013) and Mason (2011, 2021) point out that Fricker’s account presupposes that marginalized subjects cannot make proper sense of their social experience due to an unavailability of hermeneutical resources. What is most harmful, however, is not a marginalized subject’s lack of concepts, but rather a dominantly situated subject’s insufficient concept application.

We concur with this criticism. Additionally, we identify another shortcoming in Fricker’s theory as well as in that of the subsequent critiques. The cited accounts fail to address what “hermeneutical resources” precisely are. This constitutes a significant oversight in theories on epistemic oppression. Our paper therefore aims to specify the notion of “collective hermeneutical resources”. Are they practices, propositions, theories or terms? We argue that a detailed understanding of hermeneutical resources enables us to discern the many ways in which these resources fail to be deployed by dominantly situated subjects. Additionally, we identify which negative consequences this failure entails for marginalized subjects regarding the epistemic labor that is demanded of them.

To illustrate our argument, we concentrate on the concept “genderqueer”: Members of the category “genderqueer”, according to Robin Dembroff, “collectively destabilize the idea that men and women are discrete, exclusive, and exhaustive gender categories, and do so because of members’ felt or desired gender categorization outside this exclusive and exhaustive binary” (Dembroff 2020: 12). To express their identity, the respective communities use the term “genderqueer”, which to this date receives little uptake in mainstream discourse. Mason’s criticism denotes exactly that: the marginalized are indeed able to capture their identity by hermeneutical tools, yet these tools are not recognized by a broader public. An additional merit of the example “genderqueer” is that it points to the many ways in which hermeneutical resources can be conceptualized. We propose that the practice of the use of correct pronouns, “genderqueer” as a term, as well as the theory that looks beyond the gender binary can be considered as hermeneutical resources. Applying this broad understanding of hermeneutical resources is important to grasp the multitude of possible uptake failures. They encompass neglecting to address people by their correct pronouns, a refusal to apply gender markers outside of the binary “man” and “woman”, as well as a failure to acknowledge theories that are critical of a binary gender system. Furthermore, we argue that identifying the multidimensional character of hermeneutical resources is crucial for understanding how the marginalized are instrumentalized to make certain categories and practices visible. This aspect is connected to theories on epistemic exploitation (Berenstain 2016), which critically deal with the fact that explanatory labor is expected of marginalized subjects to a greater proportion.

Feminist philosophy / Philosophy of race & gender, Epistemology

**Keywords:** Epistemic Oppression, Hermeneutical Resources, Epistemic Exploitation, Genderqueerness, Feminist Epistemology

Elysa Kooijman (Tilburg University)

### **The double bind of the philosophical canon**

In 2003 Mignolo developed a critique on the philosophical canon as being problematically exclusionary towards philosophers of colour and non-Western philosophies. For this critique Mignolo used the concept of the 'double bind', developed originally in the field of psychology, to illustrate and explain how the philosophical canon has been problematically excluding philosophers of colour and non-Western philosophies. This paper applies Mignolo's concept of the double to bind, to analyse how the philosophical canon has been problematically exclusive towards female\* philosophers and feminist philosophies, which is unfortunately still a problem the field grapples with (Kings, 2019). By drawing similarities between racial, ethnic and gender motivated exclusion, this essay lays the foundation for an intersectional critique of the philosophical canon, particularly analysing the discrimination of those who experience multiple marginalised identities. As such, I will start this paper by explaining the concept of the double bind as it is mentioned in Mignolo's work — as excessive similarity and an excessive difference — as well as its origin in Bateson's work, which defines it as a contradictory message containing a threat. After this I will use the concept of the double bind to show that the philosophical canon is also exclusionary to female\* philosophers and feminist philosophy. I will show that the philosophical canon is male-coded and that it sends out a similar message to women\* as it does to non-Western philosophers, with the same threat of excluding them from the canon. However, where non-Western philosophers are judged on the Westernness in their work, female\* philosophers are judged on the degree of masculinity in their work. After that I will bring in the concern that the exclusion of women\* from the philosophical canon through the double bind might not actually be problematic. Namely because, from this unique outside position, women\* are able to critique the canon in a way that is not possible to do from within. Lastly, I will reply to this concern by arguing that the exclusion of female\* philosophers through the double bind from the canon is a problem, because it leads to a vicious cycle of marginalisation.

Feminist philosophy / Philosophy of race & gender, Non-Western philosophy

**Keywords:** Decolonial theory, Double bind, Metaphilosophy, Myth of the genius

Jenny Zhang (University of Edinburgh)

### **A new direction for moral psychology? A case for moral experiences qua experiences**

One prominent strand of discussion in moral psychology is sparked by Jonathan Haidt's (2001) seminal paper, in which he proposes the Social Intuitionist Model (SIM) of moral judgement. SIM is proposed as an alternative to the rationalist approaches, and it differs from them in two important ways: a) it emphasises that social and cultural influences play a significant role in shaping moral judgements; b) it proposes that moral intuitions, as opposed to moral reasons, usually directly cause moral judgements. The debate that ensues Haidt's proposal primarily revolves around identifying or establishing a theory of moral judgement that best accommodates the growing empirical evidence on reasoning and moral behaviour, one that wins the "contest between models of the partnership between reasoning and intuition" (Haidt, 2010, p. 182-183).

I argue that the abovementioned debate is empirically informed in a skewed way, and headed towards a wrong direction. It is skewed because many of the studies that it appeals to are conducted in laboratory settings, devoid of the nuances and complexity present in everyday moral experiences. The discussion is headed towards a wrong direction because of the assumption that empirical evidence is useful insofar as it gets us closer to building an overarching model, a well-organised, all-encompassing outlook of moral psychology. Under this picture, our moral experiences are of no value other than that they are instantiations of some mechanisms or processes underpinning morality.

I believe that our moral experiences are significant qua experiences. They are rich, messy and particular to us, and we experience them as such. Importantly, we often take them to be central to our moral life. This, I think, points to the possibility that any reductionist or foundationalist accounts of moral judgement inevitably overlook, mischaracterise or oversimplify (at least some) morally relevant experiences. To capture the complexity, richness and sometimes difficulty of moral life, it is necessary to recognise the irreducible nature and immense value of moral experiences. This requires that we shift and expand the locus of discussion that has preoccupied debates in moral psychology for the past few decades: instead of confining the key issues to the extent to which reasoning or intuition plays a role in moral judgement formation, what neurobiological mechanisms or processes are involved in moral development, or the extent to which social or cultural conditioning exerts influence on moral behaviour, we need to see moral functioning as necessarily multi-faceted, interactive, and importantly, experiential.

In my paper, I first outline the discussion following Haidt's (2001) proposal. I then draw on and adapt Cora Diamond's (2008) insights to show that there is something fundamentally amiss in the discourse. Specifically, I argue that the debate neglects, sidelines or detracts from what moral experiences comprise, and what it is like for someone to undergo these experiences. I suggest that to rectify the problem, we need to look beyond studies conducted in laboratory, and reflect upon the status, characteristics and constituents of moral experiences qua experiences.

Meta ethics / Moral philosophy

**Keywords:** moral experience, affective experience, moral psychology, moral judgement formation, Cora Diamond

Jessica Sutherland (University of Birmingham)

### **Are Child Soldiers Morally Ignorant?**

Child soldiers are often portrayed in the media and by charities and NGOs as nonresponsible agents unable to understand the meaning of their actions and often under the control of their adult leaders (Thomason, 2016). The Kony 2012 campaign led by Invisible Children (2022, Russell, 2012) is symptomatic of this. In the viral video, phrases such as “[the child soldiers] don’t want to do what [Joseph Kony] says but he forces them to do bad things” are often used (Russell, 2012, 00:10:24-00:10:29).

I argue that this approach to the moral responsibility of child soldiers ultimately fails to consider the richer picture of the agency of child soldiers. By not acknowledging the moral responsibility of child soldiers, we fail to recognise the agency of child soldiers.

My argument in this paper will be as follows. First, I will outline what moral responsibility is and suggest that moral responsibility requires agents to be morally competent. Second, I will argue that to be morally competent, agents must have a grasp of what the moral reasons are. As such, if an agent is morally ignorant then they cannot be morally competent, and therefore cannot be morally responsible.

I will then argue that because of the special conditions of war, there are specific moral reasons that must be recognised by combatants. Traditional just war theory recognises three kinds of considerations; *jus in bello* (essentially what is permissible during and in a war), *jus ad bellum* (under what conditions is it permissible to go to war), and *jus post bellum* (what is permissible after war).

Leaving *jus post bellum* considerations to the side, I argue that, for those directly involved in conflict, we can generally separate these types of considerations into three different groups in a hierarchy (with 1 being the easiest to recognise and 3 being the hardest)— (1) human suffering and death, (2) *jus in bello* considerations, and (3) *jus ad bellum* considerations. And these types of moral reasons seem to have different levels of importance, nuance and perhaps stringency, with human suffering and death generally being the easiest to recognise, and *jus ad bellum* considerations being the most difficult to recognise as an agent on the ground. I therefore propose this hierarchy of moral reasons for agents directly involved in war – most typically soldiers on the ground. I will argue that to be morally responsible, soldiers (including child soldiers) must be able to recognise reasons which fall into the first and second categories. Considerations at the level of *jus ad bellum* are too high a bar for moral responsibility. Whether *jus ad bellum* considerations are required to be morally justified is an argument for just war revisionists to make.

Finally, using testimony from child soldiers as evidence, I will argue that child soldiers are able to recognise these moral reasons at least up to and including *jus in bello* reasons. As such, child soldiers are not morally ignorant, and therefore moral ignorance cannot be used to excuse their moral responsibility.

Meta ethics / Moral philosophy, Applied ethics

**Keywords** Moral responsibility, Moral Ignorance, Child Soldiers, Just war theory

Kathleen Murphy-Hollies (University of Birmingham)

### **Are Conspiracy Theorists Confabulating?**

In this talk I suggest that understanding the claims of conspiracy theorists as confabulations can illuminate what those claims are really about and what considerations underlie reason-giving for those claims. I start by considering some accounts of confabulation in the literature and the contentions around certain features. I settle on some key features which seem to be well supported and important.

Then, I suggest that conspiracy theorist's claims can be understood as confabulation in that sense. Specifically, that confabulating conspiracy theorists offer motivating reasons for their conspiracist beliefs which do not aim solely to track and explain a causal history for their views. Furthermore, I suggest that conspiracy theorists do not have cognitive access to a more accurate explanation of the origin of their views but do not aim to deceive. They also have relevant motivations; to justify their views, to provide an answer to peers, and construct a certain image of themselves. These factors are also widely regarded to be present in instances of confabulation (Sullivan-Bissett 2015, Stammers 2020).

Recognising that these factors are present in both confabulation and conspiracist claims enables us to understand the nature of conspiracist claims better. In seeking to justify rather than causally explain, we can understand the 'chopping and changing' nature of defences of conspiracy theories, even to the extent that agents endorse multiple conspiracy theories which are inconsistent with each other. For example, believing both that the coronavirus is a hoax and also a weapon released by China. In confabulation too we see internally inconsistent statements employed in justifying one's own convictions. These statements are understood as secondary confabulations and outputs of argumentative reasoning-mechanisms (Mercier & Sperber 2011) which are 'based off' each other in aid of portraying a certain image or narrative of the agent, rather than considerations which stand in causal relations to each other and paint one, coherent, causal picture of events.

Confabulation and conspiracist claims also both draw on certain values. Confabulators draw on normative values to justify themselves and to embolden their agency, signalling that they are rational and trustworthy (Ganapini 2019; Bortolotti 2018). Conspiracy theories too are opportunities for agents to signal their values. Conspiracist claims about vaccinations being harmful often draw on values of bodily autonomy, transparency, and concern for oneself and loved ones. Relatedly, Cassam (2019) argues that conspiracy theories embody certain political values.

There are two practical lessons which we can take from understanding conspiracist claims as confabulations. Firstly, in both cases we see bizarre, profoundly ill-grounded claims which are very poorly supported by evidence. However, conceptualising these claims as confabulations makes them more understandable; we often see that reason-giving is motivated by considerations other than the relevant evidence. Secondly, we see how blurred the line is between epistemic faults and character faults. It is not clear in either confabulation or conspiracy theories what 'goes wrong' (Levy 2019; 2021). If nothing is particularly 'malfunctioning' epistemically, it may be that other skills relevant to the regulation of embodying values is a fruitful avenue for responding to conspiracy theorists.

Meta ethics / Moral philosophy, Epistemology

**Keywords** conspiracy theories, confabulation, values, regulation

Carla Peri (University of the Italian Switzerland)

### **Haecceity as Criterion of Identity**

Identity, we would say, is utterly unproblematic; however, the spiciest issues in the contemporary metaphysical debate are about identity. Even if it is uncontroversial to claim that everything is identical with itself, in certain cases, like persistence and cross-world identity, it is not so quick to state the identity between two individuals. In other words, if it is uncontroversial that  $x=x$ , it can be tricky to verify if  $x$  is the same as  $y$ . For instance, it is controversial to determine if the individual  $x$  at  $t_1$  is the same as the individual  $y$  at  $t_2$ . This paper wants to investigate these tricky cases and propose individual essences- in a particular reading that treat them as haecceities- as the tool to grasp the identity of each individual. Thus, we will argue that haecceities work as identity makers.

Haecceities in the metaphysical debates were always considered obscure. The darkness derives from a double mistake. Philosophers used to say that the English translation of haecceity is thisness. The reason is simple: the Latin word "haec" corresponds to the English "this". However, philosophers intend thisness differently from what Duns Scotus, for instance, wants to grasp with haecceity. The second relevant distinction that should be noted is between haecceity and self-identity. Indeed, some thinkers believe that the notion of self-identity grasps the concept we want to get with haecceity. By analysing the corresponding formal definitions, we will clarify that haecceity should be distinguished from thisness and self-identity.

We will then argue that haecceity is the best candidate to work as an individual essence. Since haecceity is the property that we exemplify until we are alive and is unique and specific for each individual, it can be defined as individual essence. If haecceity is individual essence, we can then solve the main identity issues. The two problems we will focus on are Transworld Identity and Persistence.

On the one hand, The problem of identity across worlds concerns the issue of how an individual who inhabit the actual world @ can also be in another possible one,  $w_1$ , by remaining the same individual. On the other hand, the problem of identity across times is the problem of explaining how individuals are the same at different times. We have to justify that Elisabeth II is the same individual since 1926, and she will maintain her identity until the end of her life. We want to suggest that, using haecceity as identity-makers, we can state that individuals persist by being wholly present at each time of their existence. In other words, we can support Endurantism.

The plan is thus the following: we will start by focusing on identity and individual essence. We will then clarify the notion of haecceity. Finally, we will analyse the problems of Transworld Identity and Persistence.

Metaphysics / Ontology

**Keywords:** Essence, Identity, Transworld Identity, Persistence, Haecceity

Elena Collaro (Durham University)

### **Mental Time Travel in nonhuman animals: a case study**

Mental time travel (Tulving, 1985) is the faculty that allows a subject to mentally project themselves into the past (through episodic memory) and into the future (through episodic foresight) to re-live or to pre-live personal events. It is studied in relation to the development and use of several skills, among which language, decision making, planning and cooperation. The interest in the topic from a cognitive perspective is motivated by the fact that mental time travel relies on flexibility, displacement, and abstraction to take a subject back and forth in time. It is researched in humans as well as across species. The debate in mental time travel covers a range of key issues, such as identifying a hallmark for human uniqueness centred around intellectual skills and establishing a paradigm of cognitive abilities in nonhuman animals that determines the need for special protection and conservation of certain species (e.g., debates around the consumption of octopus' meat, or the conservation of orangutans).

Research around mental time travel is fairly established in humans. Conversely, there are still conspicuous doubts and structural issues around studying the phenomenon in nonhuman animals. The theoretical standpoint that theorised the impossibility for mental time travel to be found in nonhuman animals (Suddendorf and Corballis, 1997), is still strong despite numerous attempts at refuting it. Many of the drawbacks have been worsened by the fact that while the topic has been tackled by many different disciplines (spanning from cognitive science, to psychology, to literature), and in general by researchers with various backgrounds and focusses, there is little to no open discussion at an interdisciplinary level.

In this paper, I will present my interdisciplinary research on mental time travel in nonhuman animals as a case study. Borrowing my methodological approach from ethnography of science, I will share the outcome of a series of interviews conducted throughout this academic year and directed towards researchers in mental time travel. The rationale of the project is to capture prominent opinions from academics with different backgrounds and use the data to write a report, which alongside a meta-analysis will highlight the generalised issues of the current situation in the field and suggest improvements. A case will be made for the importance of a cohesive and universalizable vocabulary for the field, and how language is used differently in human and nonhuman contexts, responding to different standards.

Philosophy of Science, Epistemology

**Keywords:** Philosophy of memory, epistemology, comparative cognition studies, ethology, neuroscience