2nd PROFOUND workshop

CAS, Turret Room

John Broome (University of Oxford)
Is There Reason?

Much of our normative language implies there is stuff called 'reason'. When we say 'There is reason for Boris to go', literally we assert the existence of this stuff. Should we take this implication seriously? The best case for the existence of reason comes from the idea that what we ought to do is determined by weighing the amount of reason for and against doing it. But I argue this case is insufficient; we should reject the existence of reason. Instead, we should understand 'There is reason for Boris to go' to say that Boris's going has a particular normative property. English has no name for this property; we can describe it only as the property of being something there is reason for. The mass noun 'reason' is part of an expression that refers to this property, but it does not itself refer to anything.

Krister Bykvist (Stockholm University)
Value Magnitudes and Incomparability

Recently, there has been a (very) small revival in taking value magnitudes seriously. Values have been accepted as abstract entities in their own right rather than just equivalence classes of equally good items. As has been shown by myself, Jake Nebel and Brian Hedden, this value magnitude realism has many virtues. For example, it can (a) easily explain cross-time, cross-world, and inter-theoretical comparisons of value, (b) define goodness, badness, and neutrality without falling into the pitfalls of standard definitions, (c) provide qualitative versions of measurement axioms that seem easier to satisfy, and (d) provide qualitative versions of the axioms of social choice that enables us clarify the role of invariance conditions and to escape some central impossibility theorems.

However, since in general all magnitudes of the same kind are assumed to be comparable – e.g., one weight is either greater, lesser or the same as another weight – value magnitude realism seems to be committed to full comparability of values of the same kind. This would rule out intuitive value judgments. We can no longer claim that Mozart is neither better than, worse than, nor equally as good as Michelangelo, or that an outcome x that is much worse for me but impartially better than another outcome y, can be neither overall better, worse, nor equally as good as y, assuming that all of these items have value.

In my talk, I am going to explore the prospects of denying value comparability while accepting value magnitude realism. I shall argue that the prospects look dim unless one identifies overall value with vectors or distributions of elements (as is done by Justin D'Ambrosio and Brian Hedden). However, it turns out to be difficult to find a way of understanding the nature and structure of these elements without falling prey to objections. Even if full comparability cannot be avoided, some comfort can be found in the fact that value magnitude realism can still make sense of value ambivalence and reasonable value disagreements.

Franz Dietrich (Paris School of Economics) **and Kai Spiekermann** (LSE)
Generative Democracy: Towards New Foundations for Democratic Theory

There are many value theories of institutions, including instrumentalist, epistemic, and proceduralist theories. Before presenting a new "generativist" theory, I will defend a systematic account of what a value theory of institution is. It consists of: (1) An evaluation principle, specifying which features make institutions valuable. For instance, proceduralist theories locate value in intrinsic (fairness) features, instrumentalist theories in effects. (2) An analysis of institutions, specifying which features institutions actually have. The analysis can focus on features bearing value according to the evaluation principle. (3) An evaluation of institutions, which specifies how valuable institutions are, combining the evaluation principle with the analysis. There are two broad types of theories. One type is characterised primarily by its evaluation principle. Standard proceduralist and instrumentalist theories rest on their evaluation principle, which sets the tone for the analysis and ultimately the evaluation of institutions. The second type of theory is characterised primarily by the kind of analysis. We argue that epistemic theories are of the second type: they are characterised by an analysis according to which institutions promoting the use of knowledge tend to be superior. One might instead have thought that Epistemism is characterised by an 'epistemic' evaluation principle according to which an institution's value lies in the correctness of decisions – yet correct decisions are only means, not loci of final value.

Epistemism is too narrow, by focusing exclusively on knowledge while neglecting the role of other mental feautres such as various attitudes and experiences. The full breadth of mental features seems relevant for (re)evaluating institutions in light of the recent emergence of populist movements around the world. While we make no empirical claims, our value theory of institutions – "Generativism" – goes beyond Epistemism by addressing the role of mental features in general. Like Epistemism, Generativism is a theory of second type. Its evaluation principle can take several classic forms, but its analysis must emphasise the causal role of mental changes and imply that the value of many institutions hinges on their effects through mental changes. The mental changes caused by an institution could take many forms: changes in preferences, knowledge, altruism, respect for institutions, motivation to contribute to society, etc. An institution's "generative" effects, achieved through mental changes, coexist and often compete with its "direct" effects, achieved through external mechanisms. For instance, voting rules have direct effects through how they aggregate votes, and generative effects through how they change knowledge or preferences.

Generativism conflicts with modelling practice, notably in social choice theory and game theory, all of which start from fixed mental features. At a theoretical level, Generativism is (1) inconsistent with Proceduralism, (2) highly compatible with Instrumentalism, and (3) overlapping with Epistemism. While excluding Proceduralism, Generativism is compatible with an (arguably more convincing) cousin of Proceduralism, to be called "Processualism", according to which an institution's value lies in the processes it generates, not in the institution itself.

Natalie Gold (LSE)
Reasoning as an Individual or as a Team: What Should I do When the Two Conflict?

Standard game theory cannot explain the selection of payoff-dominant outcomes that are best for all players in common-interest games. Theories of team reasoning can explain why such mutualistic cooperation is rational. They propose that teams can be agents and that individuals in teams can adopt a distinctive mode of reasoning that enables them to do their part in achieving Pareto-dominant outcomes. So it can be rational to play payoff-dominant outcomes, given that an agent group identifies. Some authors have hoped that it would be possible to develop an argument that it is instrumentally rational to group identify. I identify some large—probably insuperable —problems with this project and sketch some more promising approaches.

Marina Moreno (LMU)
The (Im)possibility of Prudence: Population Ethics for Person-Stages

I develop a largely neglected parallel between prudence and population ethics. Prudence is generally understood to be concerned with the balancing of well-being over time. How, precisely, well-being ought to be balanced over time, however, is a fervently debated question. I argue that developing a standard guiding such evalua- tions is exceedingly challenging. This is due to an often overlooked fact about pru- dence, namely that it shares a structural similarity with population ethics: In both contexts, we assess the comparative value of populations of person-stages/people, which may vary in number and level of well-being. Based on this analogy, I show that the development of an adequate theory of prudence runs into very similar impossi- bility results as obtain in population ethics. In particular, I prove that Arrhenius's fifth impossibility theorem can be applied to prudence. I develop and compare four possible answers to this challenge. First, I discuss the possibility of accepting the very repugnant conclusion intrapersonally. Second, I present and further develop Donald Bruckner's Minimax Regret approach, which gives up Transitivity. Third, I apply Jacob Nebel's Lexical Threshold View to prudence and critically evaluate it. Lastly, I introduce what I call the Negative Lexicality View, which is based on Lexical Threshold View but overcomes some of its problems.

Michael Morreau (UiT) **& Attila Tanyi** (UiT)
Pockets of Unity in Practical Reason: Lessons from Social Choice Theory

Practical reason lacks unity if there is no single normative standpoint, whose verdicts about what ought simpliciter to be done sometimes agree with the verdict of morality and sometimes with a conflicting verdict of self-interest. We first formulate the question of unifying normative standpoints within Arrow's framework in social choice theory, casting normative standpoints in the role of voters and unifying standpoints in the role of Arrow's social welfare functions. We then argue that there are at least pockets of unity within practical reasoning: there are unifying principles that, in realistically limited domains of cases, adjudicate among conflicting verdicts of morality and self-interest, while agreeing with both wherever their verdicts are the same. Finally, we show that well-known impossibilities of

social choice theory cannot be repurposed to demonstrate the disunity of practical reason. This is because there is no sense in imposing on unifying normative standpoints analogues of the domain and supervenience assumptions that are implicated in these impossibilities.

Wlodek Rabinowicz (Lund University)
Goodness and Numbers

You can save either David or both Peter and Mary. Is there a compelling reason for saving the greater number? Taurek (1977) (in)famously denied it. To provide such a reason, one might attempt to establish that it is better if more people survive rather than fewer. This would settle the issue for consequentialists, but even non-consequentialists might find this betterness judgment relevant to the question at hand. The standard worry, though, is that such judgments rest on potentially illegitimate aggregation of gains and losses of different persons. Frances Kamm's well-known Aggregation Argument was meant to overcome this difficulty. I consider how her argument is dealt with by various commentators and what is wrong with it from Taurek's own point of view. But then I suggest that this point of view isn't tenable: While Taurek plausibly analyses betterness in terms of fitting preferences, his treatment of fittingness appeals to the wrong kind of reasons. Still, even so, Kamm's argument can be criticized on quite different lines. A closely related argument with the same conclusion may be more compelling. Unlike Kamm's, that argument recognizes that lives, even quite ordinary lives, may well be incommensurable in value.

Andrew Reisner (Uppsala University)
Welfarist Pluralism: Why and How Epistemic and Pragmatic Reasons for Belief Compare

Although the idea that there are pragmatic normative reasons for belief has gained a greater degree of acceptance in recent years, there is still rather less discussion about views on which there are both basic pragmatic normative reasons for belief and basic epistemic normative reasons for belief. In this talk, I present the outlines of a view according to which there are basic normative reasons of both kinds and discuss its mechanics of how those reasons combine to determine what one ought to believe. I raise some remaining unresolved problems for the account.

Justin Snedegar (University of St Andrews)
Meddlesome Blame and Negotiating Standing

Blaming others for things that are not our business can attract charges of meddling and corresponding dismissals of blame. Such charges can be contentious because the content and applicability of anti- meddling norms can be difficult to nail down. In addition, it is often not settled in advance whether some wrongdoing is or is not the business of a would-be blamer. Rather than pointing out violation of some pre-established anti-meddling norm, charges of meddling may sometimes be attempts to put such a norm in place. This has, as far as I know, not received much attention, but is unsurprising when we look at plausible grounds of anti-meddling norms, e.g. privacy, intimacy, and respect for victims. These kinds of considerations

very plausibly allow for a significant range of discretion in the content of norms they ground. This brings out at least three important upshots for the ethics of blame: (i) victims of wrongdoing often have the prerogative to decide who can blame on their behalf; (ii) perhaps surprisingly, wrongdoers themselves sometimes can decide who has standing to blame them; and (iii) norms of criticism, including standing norms, are often up for negotiation, and dismissals of blame can be moves in such a negotiation of trying to establish boundaries on blame, rather than merely pointing out violations of pre-established boundaries.

Johanna Thoma (University of Bayreuth)
Non-uniqueness and the Normative Foundations of Rational Choice Theory

Where different types of reasons pull an agent in different directions it is usually assumed that she ought to somehow form preferences that are appropriately based on the totality of reasons while being consistent according to the requirements of rational choice theory. Controversy has centred around just how agents should integrate, aggregate or adjudicate between reasons in order to achieve this. I argue that, whatever the method, there will be a broad range of circumstances where there are various permissible ways for agents to arrive at coherent preferences on the basis of conflicting reasons. This non-uniqueness has at least two important implications: For one, agents will not generally be subject to a reasons-based requirement to act on the preferences they have formed. But acting in accordance with one's preferences is a central requirement of rational choice theory. And secondly, agents may be subject to a reasons-based requirement not to perform certain series of choices, even if each of those choices would have been permissible in isolation. These implications call for a rethinking of the normative foundations of rational choice theory.