

ABSTRACTS

Social Complexes: Parts and Wholes.

Perspectives from Metaphysics, Ethics and Philosophy of Action.

Department of Philosophy, Lund University, 11-12 October 2013

<http://www.fil.lu.se/institutionen/anknuten-verksamhet/konferenser/social-complexes-parts-and-wholes-perspectives-from-metaphysics-ethics-and-philosophy-of-action/>

DONALD BAXTER

University of Connecticut, USA

Social Complexes, Aspects, and Many-One Identity

Is a social complex many united people or an entity in addition to the people? I will assume that a social complex is a plural subject in Margaret Gilbert's sense, and will argue that it is many people united by a joint commitment. To understand the unity requires distinguishing the people insofar as they are jointly committed from themselves insofar as they are individuals. Likewise it requires distinguishing each person insofar as she is jointly committed from herself insofar as she is an individual. I present and motivate my theory of Aspects to argue that these differences do not require an additional entity. In an epicycle, I present my theory of Many-One Identity and use it to argue that, though many people and not an *additional* entity, a social complex can also count as a single entity.

GUNNAR BJÖRNSSON

Umeå University, Sweden

Resolutions of Responsibility

Sometimes we fail to see something because we use the wrong resolution: we fail to see the forest for the trees, or the picture for the pixels. In this talk I consider at three ways in which the wrong resolution might make us blind to agents' responsibility: blind to shared responsibility, blind to the responsibility of corporations, and blind to the responsibility of individual agents.

JOHAN BRÄNNMARK

Malmö University, Sweden

Future Generations as Rightholders

Many people believe that we have obligations with respect to future generations and that some of these obligations concern the state of the environment that we pass on to our descendants. Apart from the practical problem of people not acting on such beliefs to any greater extent, there are also conceptual or philosophical issues that make these obligations problematic, the so-called Non-Identity Problem being especially difficult: depending on which course of action we adopt, different people will be born in the future, which means that even future people who live under fairly poor circumstances due to our behavior will not have any ground for complaint. Had we not behaved as we did, they would not even have existed. It is argued here that, at least within a rights-theoretical approach, the Non-Identity problem can be solved by moving from considering individual rights to generational rights, rights which future generations as wholes are the bearers of.

MARION GODMAN

Helsinki University, Finland / University of Cambridge, Great Britain

Social Groups without Collective Agency

TBA

JOHANNA SEIBT

Aarhus University, Denmark

Collective Action and Collective Responsibility: a Process-Ontological Typology

In this talk I will use the framework of General Process Theory (GPT), a process mereology, in order to distinguish between different types of social complexes, collective actions, and associated forms of responsibility. The structural descriptions of GPT can be used to highlight differences between quasi-societies, process organizations of animal societies that we tend to interpret as "collective actions," and genuine social complexes organized by human intentional behavior. Furthermore, I define various types of collective actions for agents contributing to a complex dynamics (e.g., the climate, global economy) and discuss which notions of shared outcome responsibility and shared remedial responsibility could be attributed to them.

PETER SIMONS

University of Dublin, Ireland

Social Glue

TBA

ANDERS STRAND

University of Oslo, Norway

Structural Control

In this talk I develop on the notion of structural control introduced in Strand (2012). This is partly motivated by the combined control problem, which concerns how corporate agents and individual agents can be in control of the very same actions. This problem is pressing because corporate control is widely thought to be necessary for corporate responsibility. Based on contemporary accounts of causation and causal structure, I argue that standard formulations of the combined control problem – and the closely related causal exclusion problem – require flawed causal representations. I then restate the combined control problem, and I show how the notion of structural control helps us explain how combined control works.

Strand, A. (2012) "Group agency, responsibility, and control", *Philosophy of the social sciences* 43(2) pp. 201-224.

ANDRAS SZIGETI

University of Tromsø, Norway

Collectivism about Moral Responsibility and Two Conceptions of Group Control

Collectives are more or less structured groups of human beings. Responsibility-collectivism is the view that the moral responsibility of at least some such collectives is something over and above the combined moral responsibility of individual group members. This paper focuses on one of the key conditions of responsibility: the requirement of control. It is plausible that this requirement also applies to collective agents and so collective responsibility presupposes group-control. Responsibility-collectivists have often tried to unpack the idea of group-control as non-causal control. I argue that non-causal control is not an admissible basis for attributing responsibility. Only causal group-control is. This is because non-causal group control does not provide the right kind of information regarding the ancestry of a certain outcome. Reference to the non-causal role of the group can at best amount to a prediction, not an explanation. In the second half of the paper, I discuss the difficulties which arise for responsibility-collectivism if one understands group-control as causal group-control. One of these difficulties is whether causal group-control is consistent with ontological individualism. The second concerns the relationship of group-control and individual control. I argue that the first difficulty is

manageable, but only at the price of having to accept a solution to the second difficulty which runs counter to the original aim of the responsibility-collectivist of characterizing irreducible collective responsibility as compatible with individual responsibility. Worse still, responsibility-collectivists may have to choose sides in other areas of social ontology as well. This further raises the price of this position.

DEBORAH PERRON TOLLEFSEN

University of Memphis, USA

How Groups Testify

Over the past few decades epistemologists have become increasingly interested in the ways in which we gain knowledge from others. The nature of testimony, its justification of beliefs based on it, and the knowledge we gain from it have been the topic of a great deal of debate. The focus in these debates has been, until recently, the individual speaker and hearer. But we learn from groups as well. Consider the information we receive from subcommittees, review boards, organizations, and research groups. In this presentation I shall argue for a non-reductive and non-summative account of group testimony. According to my view groups are testifiers and the epistemic responsibility that comes with being a testifier is to be attributed to group itself, rather than any particular group member.

JULIE ZAHLE

University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Methodological Holism and Emergence

One issue of dispute between methodological individualists and methodological holists is whether holist explanations are dispensable in the sense that individualist explanations are able to do their explanatory job. Methodological individualists say they are, whereas methodological holists deny this. In the first part of the paper, I discuss Elder-Vass' version of an influential argument in support of methodological holism, the argument from emergence. I argue that methodological individualists should reject it: The argument relies on a distinction between individualist and holist explanations that they find unacceptable and Elder-Vass' reasons in support of his way of drawing this distinction are not good ones. In the second part, I examine what, if anything, would be good reasons in support of a particular way of differentiating between individualist and holist explanations. I propose that a good reason is one which shows, in an acceptable manner, that the distinction, drawn in the same way in all contexts, is useful from the perspective of offering explanations of the social world. I show that if this view is adopted, it will result in a fruitful reorientation of the whole debate between methodological individualist and methodological holists.