

List of Abstracts

Barcelona Workshop 11

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Robin Andreasen (University of Delaware): “Conceptual Fragmentation and the Use of ‘Race’ in Scientific Theorizing”

This paper defends two closely related theses. The first is that race is a fragmented concept with at least two divergent, yet theoretically important, meanings. One is a social race concept; the second is a population naturalist race concept. The second turns on the question of what to do in the face of conceptual fragmentation. Should a single theoretical term (‘race’) be used to refer to each concept? Or should ‘race’ be eliminated in one or more context(s)? Currently fashionable among race scholars is the idea that ‘race’ ought to be selectively eliminated and replaced with closely related terminology when the population naturalist concept is at work, but retained when a social race concept is at work. I argue that this is not the right way to go and consider the pros and cons of ‘race’ pluralism and ‘race’ eliminativism.

Àsta (San Francisco State University): “Fixing language and fixing reality: The woman question in feminist theory”

Feminists want to end women’s oppression. But who is a woman? How should we approach that question? A lot of feminists think we should engineer the right concept of woman for feminist purposes. I take a different approach in my new book, *Categories We Live By*, where I offer a metaphysics of social categories such as women. How are these projects related? Do we need both?

Inga Bones (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology): “Engineering ‘hate speech’”

In my talk, I attempt to answer the question of what exactly should count as hate speech — how the term ‘hate speech’ should be understood, and why. The main part of the talk is thus best conceived of as an exercise in (what Haslanger calls) *amelioration* or, using a now popular term presumably coined by Blackburn (1999), *conceptual engineering*. I begin with a rough outline of what I take conceptual engineering to be (part 1). Part 2 makes the case for the need to engineer ‘hate speech’. To this end, I highlight what I take to be (some of) the most pressing problems facing the current usage of ‘hate speech’, both within philosophy and in public debate more generally, and I outline the purposes we should expect a respective engineered notion to serve. In part 3, I argue in favor of one particular way of understanding ‘hate speech’. My argument is inspired by Kate Manne’s innovative account of misogyny (2017). I claim that in order for an utterance (understood so as to

include gestures, symbols and symbolic acts, pictures, etc.) to count as an instance of hate speech, it needs to be situated in a social environment with certain unjust or discriminatory norms and expectations in place, which the respective utterance underscores and perpetuates. What is not required in order for an utterance to count as hate speech are hateful attitudes on the part of the speaker, or a particularly wide dissemination. Moreover, I show that in order to constitute (not only cause) harm, hate speech does not have to be uttered by somebody with a special kind of authority. The so-called ‘authority problem’ is thus much less pressing than suggested by some of the literature (cf., e.g., Maitra 2012).

Elisabetta Cantalamessa (University of Miami) & Jared Riggs (University of Toronto): “An inferentialist approach to conceptual engineering”

In this paper, we sketch out and defend an inferentialist approach to conceptual engineering. Viewing concepts not primarily as tools for representing the world, but rather as patterns of inference embedded in social practices, we argue, provides a clearer picture of how concepts can be flawed, why they are worth changing, and how we might go about actually changing them

Kevin Toh (University College London): “Scrutability and control in meaning engineering”

Herman Cappelen (2018, esp. chs. 7, 15) has expressed an extreme pessimism about our ability to engineer or control meaning changes. The pessimism is motivated by what could be described broadly as metasemantical considerations. I want to push back against Cappelen’s extreme pessimism by analogizing the relation between meanings and meaning determinants to two other like relations, respectively: (i) the relation between aesthetic facts and aesthetic determinants, and (ii) the relation between legal facts and legal determinants. There is, I believe, a way to arrange a sort of division of labor between these two analogies to motivate some optimism about the possibility of controlled meaning changes.

James Hampton (City University London): “What do people feel about the concepts they use?”

The need to re-engineer our concepts rests on feelings that they may be failing to do the work that we expect of them. These are feelings that philosophers share with the general public. In a project led by Nick Shea, we used survey and experimental methods to explore the kinds of metacognitive feelings that people share about everyday concepts in social, natural or artifact domains. We focused on two particular constructs. The first was the degree to which people feel that they themselves understand the concept, reflecting the familiarity or specialisation of a given concept. The second was the degree to which people feel that the concept itself is dependable, possibly being part of a large and complex coherent area of knowledge with associated expertise and providing a lot of information about its exemplars. I will describe the progress made in this project, in which we conclude that Feelings of Understanding and Dependability are important, commonly shared metacognitive constructs applied to concepts.

Nat Hansen (Reading University): “Metalinguistic proposals”

In this paper, I set out the felicity conditions for metalinguistic proposals, a type of directive illocutionary act. I discuss the relevance of metalinguistic proposals and other metalinguistic directives for understanding both small- and large-scale linguistic engineering projects, essentially contested concepts, metalinguistic provocations, and the methodology of ordinary language philosophy. I compare metalinguistic proposals with other types of linguistic interventions, including metalinguistic negotiation, conceptual engineering, lexical warfare, and ameliorative projects.

Steffen Koch (Ruhr University Bochum): “Engineering what? On Concepts in Conceptual Engineering”

‘Conceptual Engineering’ is the name of a method which aims to revise rather than describe our representational devices. But it is unclear exactly what those representational devices are. For example, are (or should) conceptual engineers primarily (be) interested in revising concepts or lexical items? And is this method primarily about the extensions of those devices, or about how members of their extensions are represented? This paper discusses two extant views on this issue — which I call *Referentialism* and *Psychologism* — and concludes that neither of them makes for a comprehensive metasemantic framework for conceptual engineering. Instead, I suggest to construe conceptual engineering along the *Dual Content View*. On this view, concepts are understood as having two (interrelated) kinds of contents: referential content and cognitive content. I show that this view is independently plausible and that it remedies the problems of *Referentialism* and *Psychologism*.

Eleonore Neufeld (University of Southern California): “Pornography and dehumanization: The essentialist dimension”

A common assumption in feminist work on pornography is that its contents are deeply dehumanizing. Yet, an important question is *in virtue of what* it is that pornography dehumanizes women. The objective of this paper is to shed light on one such mechanism. In particular, I argue that pornography *essentializes* women, and that the essentialist picture of women depicted in pornography is one central element of the dehumanizing machinery of pornography. I proceed as follows. Drawing on moral insights gained from the disability pride movement and on work in cognitive psychology, I first argue that any act of subject-essentialization (along a dimension we care about qua persons) is an act of subject-dehumanization. Second, I present evidence showing that both extreme forms of pornography, such as gonzo, but also mainstream pornography commonly deploy content that essentializes women. In particular, I show that *language* plays a special role for the essentialization of women in pornography. These two steps, then, are sufficient to establish the dehumanizing effects of pornography.

Carlos Santana (University of Utah): “Are housecats and pigeons ‘native species’ in the urban ecosystem: Re-engineering scientific concepts to deal with global change”

As human activity dramatically reshapes the global environment, the environmental sciences must continually adapt. I present four ongoing cases of contested conceptual engineering in these sciences, and discuss the implications for the philosophy of conceptual engineering.