

## ETHICS RESEARCH GROUP CONFERENCE ON NORMATIVITY

University of Tromsø, Norway

January 31-February 1, Tromsø

### Invited talks (with abstracts)

*Susanne Mantel (Saarland University)*

*Forms of Reasonableness*

Reasonableness comes in various forms. I argue that diverse individual, collective, and political strategies of reasoning count as reasonable, some of which are strategies which are meant to deal with moral disagreement. This diversity of reasonableness is nevertheless compatible with a non-pluralist view of normative reasons.

*Jonas Olson, with Stina Björkholm and Krister Bykvist (University of Stockholm)*

*Quasi-Realism and Moral Certitude*

Just as we can be more or less certain that there is extraterrestrial life or that Goldbach's conjecture is correct, we can be more or less certain about moral matters, such as whether euthanasia is permissible or whether utilitarianism is true. However, accommodating the phenomenon of degrees of moral certitude is a difficult challenge for non-cognitivist and expressivist views, according to which moral judgements are desire-like attitudes rather than beliefs (Smith 2002). Several attempts have been made on behalf of non-cognitivism and expressivism to meet the challenge (Lenman 2003; Ridge 2003, 2007; Sepielli 2012; Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016). These attempts have all been found wanting (Bykvist & Olson 2009, 2012, 2017). Michael Ridge has recently offered a quasi-realist solution, according to which expressivists can say exactly what realists say about certitude, including moral certitude. In this paper, we explain the basic problem and Ridge's quasi-realist solution. We then argue that the quasi-realist account of moral certitude faces a number of difficulties that do not arise for realist accounts, according to which moral judgements are beliefs.

*Caj Strandberg (University of Oslo)*

*Moral reasons and Practical Rationality*

A prevalent thought in metaethics has is that a 'Neo-Humean' or 'Desire-Based' view of practical rationality entails that there cannot be any categorical moral reasons. Consequently, it is generally assumed that in order to defend the existence of this type of reasons it is necessary to adopt an alternative view. However, it has turned out that these alternatives face serious difficulties. In this paper, I argue that a Neo-Humean view actually is compatible with the existence of categorical moral reasons. In particular, once we reject an implausible presumption as regards how to understand the notion of rational procedure, it is possible to defend categorical moral reasons

while maintaining this notion of rationality. Moreover, it avoids difficulties which trouble alternative views.

*Anandi Hattiangadi (University of Stockholm)*

*Normative disagreement, Referential Stability, and Meta-Representational Judgment*

I argue that disagreement intuitions (e.g. in moral twin earth cases) suggest that normative terms are highly referentially stable in the sense that they refer to the same properties irrespective of one's substantive views. Second, I argue that the best metasemantic explanation of the referential stability of normative terms makes essential appeal to meta-representational judgments — such as the judgement that we can genuinely disagree over any substantive matter.

*Antti Kauppinen (University of Helsinki)*

*Normativity and Fittingness*

Recently, there have been several proposals for treating fittingness rather than reasons as the most fundamental normative concept (Chappell 2012, McHugh and Way 2016, Howard 2017). Beyond criticisms of the details of particular fittingness-first accounts, one important question is what is gained by taking fittingness as a primitive (Rowland forthcoming). I'm going to argue that an oblique fittingness-first account that focuses not directly on the fittingness of responses but on the conditional fittingness of critical responses to the absence of the right first-order response offers two important benefits. First, it explains how reasons are normative by linking them to accountability, and more generally attitudes toward subjects. Second, it offers a principled way of making sense of different types of reason in terms of different types of critical response.

### Internal talks (with abstracts)

*Fredrik Nyseth (UiT)*

*Is Metaethical Scepticism Inconsistent?*

Metaethical scepticism is the view, roughly, that all first-order moral claims are false (or at least untrue). I argue that this view is inconsistent since it is, in the end, committed to the truth of some such claims. My argument for this draws on a much-criticised, but, I believe, generally misunderstood argument by Dworkin (1996; 2011). Unlike the argument attributed to Dworkin by his critics, however, the argument presented here cannot be dismissed by drawing a distinction between denying the truth of a moral claim on the grounds that the moral facts are otherwise, and doing so on the grounds that there are no moral facts at all. Instead, the argument targets precisely the idea that this distinction is generally available.

*Roe Fremstedal (UiT)*

*The Inescapability and Transcendence of Values? From Nihilism to Regulative Ideals*

The present chapter discusses the close connection between human agency and valuing by drawing upon Nietzsche, Mill, and Kant. More specifically, the chapter connects action theory and value theory by discussing and defending Nietzsche's claim that human agency requires values that must be realizable. It then sketches an argument for the transcendence of human values that draws on J.S. Mill and Oscar Wilde. This argument aims to show that a full realization of values would undermine rational agency, since guidance of human action requires both transcendent value and an imperfect world. However, this leads to the paradoxical view that rational agency requires values that are both transcendent and realizable, something that seems impossible. Still, the realizability and transcendence of values is reconciled by regulative ideals that can be approximated asymptotically. This broadly Kantian approach makes it possible to avoid the nihilism and pessimism that Nietzsche criticizes. Still, it points to an inescapable tension between transcendent values and facticity that seems constitutive of human agency.

*Ivar Russøy Labukt (UiT)*

*Is Logic Distinctively Normative?*

Logic is widely held to be a normative discipline. Various claims have been offered in support of this view, but they all revolve around the idea that logic is concerned with how one ought to reason. I argue that most of these claims – while perhaps correct – only entail that logic is normative in a way that many, if not all, intellectual disciplines are normative. I also identify some claims whose correctness would make logic normative in a way that sets it apart from (most) other disciplines. I argue that we have no reason think that these claims are correct. In other words, logic is not a distinctively normative discipline.

*Matthias Slåttholm Sagdahl (UiT)*

*Morality, Prudence, and Meaningfulness*

Living meaningful lives seem to be important to many agents and considerations of meaningfulness could also be seen to provide normative constraints and guidance for how people should live. Are such considerations a separate class of reasons in addition to moral and prudential reasons? Answering yes to this question would invite a number of other questions. Could such reasons conflict with moral and prudential reasons? If so, what would be their relative significance and how could we resolve such conflicts? And could reasons of meaningfulness help us arbitrate conflicts between morality and prudence, by tipping the scale or by having normative priority?

While understanding considerations of meaningfulness as a separate class of reasons seem to open up interesting philosophical questions and possibilities to explore, I shall argue that we should not pursue that route. Instead of understanding them as a separate class of reasons, distinct from both moral and prudential reasons, I shall understand meaningfulness as a value that forms part of both moral and prudential

assessments. On the other hand, I shall also argue that considerations of meaningfulness can in many cases form a bridge that can help us resolve apparent conflicts between morality and prudence by locating a shared concern.