

## Conference Report: SOPhiA 2018



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The Salzburg Conference for Young Analytic Philosophy 2018 (SOPhiA: Salzburger Concilium Omnibus Philosophis Analyticis) took place from September 12 to 15 at the University of Salzburg, Austria. More than 90 philosophers from 28 different countries participated in the conference and 94 talks were held. 86 of these talks were contributed by students and PhDs and held in English or German (est. 10%), as the conference is mostly for young philosophers to participate at an international conference. The conference also hosted five affiliated workshops and three plenary talks by invited speakers. The plenary talks were given by Elisa Aaltola (University of Eastern Finland, Finland), Helen Beebe (University of Manchester, UK), and Wolfgang Kühne (University of Hamburg, Germany).

The topics of the conference covered the main areas of Philosophy like *logic*, *epistemology*, *ethics*, etc. Also, more specific branches of philosophy like *philosophy of law* or *philosophy of mathematics* were present at the conference. Altogether, the talks at the conference were assigned to eleven sections.

The conference started with a short opening and an announcement of the winner of the best paper award. This year Maximilian Fenner was awarded for the paper “*Is the UN Charta a Global Constitution?*”.

Afterwards the opening lecture on “*Peer Disagreement and Philosophical Commitment*” was delivered by Helen Beebe. She started her talk with a comparison between philosophy and the natural sciences and the observation that while the natural sciences had a big progress in the last 500 years, philosophers are still arguing about the same fundamental questions since more than 2000 years. Moreover, philosophers with fundamentally different standpoints do not argue anymore with each other, but rather discuss with those who share their fundamental ideas. Following Beebe, it should not be the interest of philosophy to search for truth, because there is no reason to believe that it will be found or even exists, but merely to search for equilibria. Philosophy, so one of her main theses, is therefore searching for coherent states and not for a truth every philosopher needs to accept. After that the contributed

talks started with five parallel slots, while the sixth slot was occupied by one workshop on “*Der Gegenwärtige Augenblick*” (“*The Present Moment*”), organised by Florian Fischer (University of Siegen, Germany) and Philipp Ritzen (University of Düsseldorf, Germany).

The second day of the conference started with a block of five slots filled with contributed talks. Afterwards, the second plenary talk on “*Moral Psychology and Animal Ethics*” was held by Elisa Aaltola. Aaltola discussed an approach to animal ethics which is based on emotions and empathy. Placing her approach in a long tradition of ancient ethics, she argued that for a good coexistence reflexive empathy is needed, which allows one to recognise the animal as a subject of its own and oneself as its object. In such a state of seeing the surroundings “*un-selfing*” takes place and “*human directedness*” vanquishes. By this, so Aaltola, animals appear as art and as such are reason in themselves, without us recognising the world only as its value for ourselves. Aaltola concluded that emotional conceptions can heavily impact moral agency and that reflective empathy is a fruitful standpoint. She ended with an outlook on a such constructed animal ethics which is rational, empathic, attentive, and holistic.

The last section of this day, and this is a novelty for the conference series, was occupied by workshops only: The workshop “*Bolzano and Contemporary Metaphysics*” was organised by Stefan Roski (University of Hamburg, Germany) and featured talks of Anna Bollomo (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands), Kevin Mulligan (University of Geneva, Switzerland), and Benjamin Schnieder (University of Hamburg, Germany). The workshop “*Didactics in Philosophy*” was organised by Bettina Bussmann, (University of Salzburg, Austria) and featured talks of Nils Höppner (University of Münster, Germany), Sebastiano Moruzzi (University of Bologna, Italy), Sandra Prinz (University of Salzburg, Austria) and Luca Zanetti (University of Bologna, Italy). Finally, the workshop “*Popularizing Philosophy*” was organised by Frauke Albersmeier (University of Düsseldorf, Germany) and featured talks of Sascha Aulich (University of Düsseldorf, Germany), Oliver Viktor (University of Düsseldorf, Germany) and herself.

The third day of the conference started with six parallel sections of contributed talks. In the evening the last plenary talk, entitled “*Literally or Figuratively? – Reflections on Bolzano’s Philosophy of Religion and his Semiotics*”, was held by Wolfgang Künne. The talk was organized in cooperation with the *International Bernard Bolzano Society*. Künne represented the philosophy of religion of Bolzano and his interpretation

of the revelations of the bible. According to Künne, Bolzano suggested to take the texts of the bible not literally but figuratively. To examine more about figurativity, Künne discussed how metaphors work and which similarities are defined. Bolzano, so Künne, argues that “bifurcation of content” can be traced back also to traditional Christian teaching. Some important sections of the bible can not be interpreted literally according to Bolzano, because this would, e.g., contradict the view that heaven is a non-physical place. Künne stressed that for Bolzano the bible was written metaphorically to make it understandable for everyone.

On the last day of the conference a satellite workshop on “*Biological Individuality and other Issues in Contemporary Philosophy of Biology*” took place. This workshop was organised by Karim Baraghith (University of Düsseldorf, Germany) and Gregor Greslehner (University of Bordeaux, France) and featured talks of Steve Elliot (Arizona State University, Arizona), Agnieszka Proszewska (University of Kraków, Poland), Thomas Reydon (University of Hannover, Germany), Isabella Sarto-Jackson (Konrad Lorenz Institute for Evolution and Cognition Research, Klosterneuburg, Austria), Adrian Stencel (University of Krakow, Poland), Javier Suárez (University of Barcelona, Spain, & University of Exeter, UK) and Özlem Yilmaz (Konrad Lorenz Institute for Evolution and Cognition Research, Klosterneuburg, Austria).

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