

WORKSHOP

HUMAN-FRIENDLY WORLDVIEWS

THE NEW INSTITUTE
13 FEBRUARY 2024
HAMBURG

9:30 –
10:00

FROM WORLDVIEWS TO ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY

Dean Rickles

Abstract: If we are in the business of devising goals for humanity, then we had better consider deeper matters of meaning and metaphysics (covered by the field of ontological security studies). The current underlying worldview for, e.g., the UNs goals, are far from providing humanity with an appealing vision of their place in the world. I suggest some alternative worldviews that fit the flourishing bill more closely.

10:00 –
10:30

ROMANTIC EMPIRICISM

Dalia Nassar

Abstract: Dalia Nassar will discuss the apparently contradictory notion of “romantic empiricism” which she develops in her recent book with the title. She will outline the aims of the book, while also elaborating the relevance of romantic empiricism for environmental thought and practice today.

10:30 –
11:15

IGNORE WHAT THEY SAY: PHYSICS DOES NOT PREVENT AGENCY!

George Ellis

Abstract: George Ellis will speak on some of the ways in which reductionism and determinism fail in physics, thereby removing the ground of scientific claims against agency.

11:15 –
11:45

Coffee Break

11:45 –
12:30

NON-MATERIAL PRINCIPLES OF EUDAIMONIC SOCIETIES

Andrej Zwitter

Abstract: The distinction between cardinal and spiritual (or theological) virtues is a central aspect of Christian philosophical and ethical traditions. This distinction was systematically developed and popularized by St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas identified the cardinal virtues as prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, drawing from the virtues emphasized by Plato and Aristotle. The spiritual or theological virtues, as defined by Aquinas, are faith, hope, and charity (or love). Unlike cardinal virtues, which can be developed through human effort, spiritual virtues are considered divinely inspired and transcend the material and temporal boundaries of the carnal world. As both Aquinas and Augustine demonstrate, these virtues uniquely enable transcendence of conflicts and foster concord among citizens in a society. Given that spiritual virtues are divinely inspired and beyond mere willful attainment, yet essential for eudaimonic societal flourishing, how can a society nurture the non-material foundations for these virtues? An answer may lie in Augustine's multidimensional conception of universal peace. This presentation will consider first the non-temporal and non-spatial character of the spiritual virtues. It will then illustrate their effects, and subsequently it will consider Augustine's Universal Peace as template for eudaimonic societies

12:30 – Lunch
1:30

1:30 – **HUMAN BEINGS AS FREE AGENTS**
2:15 Kevin Mitchell

Abstract: Kevin Mitchell will discuss some themes from his book 'Free Agents: How Evolution gave us Free Will', arguing that we are not mere machines responding to physical forces but agents acting with purpose.

2:15 – **A TRIPARTITE PICTURE OF REALITY**
2:45 Harald Atmanspacher

Abstract: I will introduce dual-aspect monism, a worldview that expands traditional ways of thinking about mind and matter by a realm of nature that is psychophysically neutral, i.e. neither mental nor physical. As outlined in detail in a recent monograph (see attached for an appetizer), correlations between the mental, the physical and the psychophysically neutral are substantiated by various kinds of meaning. Some examples will illustrate how this is to be understood.

2:15 – **NEW REALISM AND THE INDISPENSABILITY THESIS –
2:45 HOW WE FIT INTO NATURE**
Markus Gabriel

Participants:

Harald Atmanspacher is an Emeritus member of the Turing Center at ETH Zurich. As a theoretical physicist with more than three decades of experience in interdisciplinary research, he is known for his work on complex dynamical systems, non-reductive approaches in the philosophy of science, foundational questions of quantum theory, and non-commutative structures in physics and cognition. He is one of the principal architects of a systematic and coherent account of mind-matter relations called dual-aspect monism. He is an elected honorary member of the International Association of Analytical Psychology, President of the Society for Mind-Matter Research and editor of its journal *Mind and Matter*.

George Ellis is Professor Emeritus and Research Fellow at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and a Fellow at The New Institute, Hamburg, Germany. He started his research career studying General Relativity Theory and Cosmology at the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, Cambridge University, where he wrote *The Large Scale Structure of Spacetime* with Stephen Hawking. He returned to the University of Cape Town in 1973 where he started a research group in general relativity and cosmology, but also started research in areas such as low-income housing policy, quality of life indicators, and how complexity such as the brain emerges from the underlying physics. He has been visiting professor at many universities round the world, including a period as Professor of Cosmic Physics at the International School of Advanced Studies (SISSA) in Trieste. He has written or co-authored 15 books and some hundreds of papers with over 47000 citations. He has 7 honorary degrees and was awarded the Star of South Africa medal by President Nelson Mandela. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society, London (FRS) and of the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS).

Markus Gabriel is an internationally acclaimed philosopher and holds the Chair in Epistemology, Modern and Contemporary Philosophy at the University of Bonn. He is the Director of the Center for Science and Thought as well as Chairman of the International Centre for Philosophy NRW. He has been awarded numerous prizes, fellowships, and visiting professorships. His books have been translated into many languages. Markus is the Academic Director of THE NEW INSTITUTE (together with his co-director Anna Katsman).

Kevin Mitchell is an Associate Professor of Genetics and Neuroscience at Trinity College Dublin. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley (1997), where he studied nervous system development, and he did postdoctoral research at Stanford University, using molecular genetics to study

neural development in the mouse. His current research is aimed at understanding the genetic program specifying the wiring of the brain and its relevance to variation in human faculties, especially to psychiatric and neurological disease and to perceptual conditions like synaesthesia. He also studies the biology of agency and free will. He is an active communicator on Twitter (@WiringtheBrain) and writes a popular blog on the intersection of genetics, development, neuroscience, psychology and psychiatry (<http://www.wiringthebrain.com>).

Dalia Nassar is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney. Her work sits at the intersection of the history of German philosophy and environmental philosophy and ethics. Her most recent monograph, *Romantic Empiricism: Nature, Art, and Ecology from Herder to Humboldt* (Oxford University Press, 2022) investigates the understudied tradition of romantic empiricism, highlights its significance for the development of ecology, and argues for its contemporary relevance in addressing environmental questions and concerns. By showing how the romantic empiricists deepened their understanding of nature through artistic skills and tools, Nassar also demonstrates the significance of art for knowledge, and highlights the ways in which epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics are fundamentally interdependent.

Dean Rickles is a Professor at the University of Sydney, specializing in the History and Philosophy of Modern Physics. He also serves as the Co-Director of the university's Centre of Time exploring the nature and psychology of time. His primary research focus is the history and philosophy of modern physics, particularly quantum gravity and spacetime physics. However, he also has strong interests in econophysics, population health, and musicology. He holds a PhD from the University of Leeds, focusing on conceptual issues of quantum gravity. Between 2005 and 2007 he took up a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Calgary. From 2008 he received a 5-year ARC Australian Research Fellowship and a 4-year ARC Future Fellowship in 2014 researching quantum gravity. He has many other academic interests outside of physics, philosophy, and history, including the study of consciousness; AI and machine learning; musicology; art; architecture; economics; public health; theology and religion; and psychology. He trained as a concert pianist earlier in life, and still gives sporadic recitals.

Andrej Zwitter is Chair of Governance and Innovation and co-founder of the inter- and transdisciplinary branch Faculty Campus Fryslân at the University of Groningen. This newly founded faculty dedicated to “Global Challenges and Local Solutions” combines education and research in the domains of sustainability, development, and digitalization. Andrej earned his PhD in Law, Legal Philosophy and International Law. His research foci include Big Data ethics, cyber governance, humanitarian action and state of emergency

politics. Andrej has also extensively published on subjects such as humanitarian action or just war and universal peace theory. He is passionate about understanding how modern technology affects society and how it can contribute to solving global challenges.