

Three Workshops on: Moral Agency, Deliberative Awareness, and Conscious Control

In this series of workshops (three in total) we explore fundamental issues concerning moral agency (free will, personal responsibility, acting for reasons) in relation to relevant research in the behavioral, cognitive, and neurosciences (hereafter: BCN sciences). Although we are interested in critical papers with regard to these developments and the aforementioned topics in moral philosophy, we especially seek constructive contributions, fruitfully bringing together research from these two areas, resulting in new and exciting philosophical problems, answers to traditional philosophical puzzles, or conceptual refinement with the help of philosophical concepts of interesting empirical research.

The workshops aim to discuss work in progress on the subjects outlined below, such that subsequent papers can be revised and collectively published (in a special issue or volume). At the workshop 30 minute slots will be available for presentation of the papers, followed by 45 minutes of discussion (including comments of invited commentators). Drafts will be distributed two weeks in advance of the workshop.

Please send us an extended abstract (about 1500 words) of your intended paper and/or your interest in active participation as a commentator and a short bio (related to your research) or list of publications before April 8th, 2010 (for the first workshop) by e-mail (pdf or plain text, vanvoorstvader@fwb.eur.nl). Notification of acceptance will be based on these abstracts and can be expected the first week of June. The paper itself is expected six weeks before the start of the workshop.

If you already know that you are interested to present a paper at one of the other workshops you can send us the above details, preferably before August this year (we will use this information to keep you updated, to obtain further funding and to explore options for publication).

Friday and Saturday 15–16 October 2010, Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Strawsonian and Consequentialist Views on Personal Responsibility— Call for Papers

In 1962, Peter F. Strawson concluded his hallmark essay “Freedom and Resentment” with the remark that in the end something like the optimist view—sufficiently radically modified—on personal responsibility is the right one. With this he had in mind the view that our everyday practices of responsibility keep their *raison d’être* even if free will (in the libertarian sense of the concept) would be an illusion. According to Strawson, optimist views appeal to the beneficial consequences to our society of our concepts and practices of responsibility. Pessimists, on the other hand, are morally indignant about the suggestion that beneficial consequences sufficiently justify our practices. Strawson pointed out that this reaction itself discloses how deeply rooted our natural reactive attitudes to one another are, and suggested that the whole metaphysical debate on the issue of free will and personal responsibility should take this as its point of departure. The quest for a justification of ascribing personal responsibility to one another can only be understood from within the practice in which we approach each other as responsible agents. Philosophers as Susan Wolf and Jay Wallace have taken up the challenge and developed views in which our mundane ability to respond to reasons prominently figures in the justification of our everyday ascriptions of moral responsibility.

Almost half a century later developments in the BCN sciences provide reason to rethink the nature, value and possibility of consequentialist justifications of our everyday practices of moral responsibility. Empirical findings such as reported by Benjamin Libet, Michael Gazzaniga and Daniel Wegner have raised doubts about both the existence of libertarian free will and our ability to act for reasons. However very few of the people who doubt these abilities are ready to accept the conclusion that we should abandon or radically change our everyday practices of moral responsibility. This might indicate a widespread attraction to consequentialist justifications of those practices. For this workshop we invite (1) papers that reflect on the resistance to abandonment or revisionism of our everyday practices, as well as (2) papers critically discussing consequentialist justifications of those practices.

Suitable topics include:

- the nature, possibility and desirability of consequentialist justifications of our practices of responsibility
- the scope and function of our practices of moral responsibility
- comparisons of consequentialist views, their problems and solutions
- defenses and criticisms of specific consequentialist justifications or arguments
- Strawsonian and other arguments against consequentialist justifications of personal responsibility

Deadline abstract and bio/list of publications: **April 8th, 2010**;

Notification of acceptance: **June 1th, 2010**.

Deadline paper: **September 1st, 2010**;

Friday and Saturday 16–17 September 2011, Rotterdam, The Netherlands: **Everyday Reason Talk—Call for Papers**

The concept of 'practical reasons' plays a prominent role in metaethics and in the philosophy of mind and action. In both areas there are controversies about how to understand the concept exactly. Three ideas are widely agreed upon: (1) that we are reasons responsive beings, (2) that the practice of giving and asking for reasons plays a prominent role in our everyday moral practices, and (3) that there exist some kind of trustworthy relation between our reasons and reason talk and our subsequent actions.

Developments in the BCN sciences indicate that much of what we do takes place at an automatic and unaware level, and that the reasons we provide to explain and/or justify ourselves should not be taken as reports of introspected internal states that preceded our bodily movements. Also, more generally speaking, it appears that what we do (and do not do) and for what reasons is less transparent to ourselves as we might have assumed. This brings up two questions: (1) how exactly do our everyday reason talk, our reasons (the reasons we have and the reasons there are) and our nature as reason-responsive beings connect to one another?; and (2) how do all three connect to our actions? This workshop invites papers that scrutinize parts of this threefold relation.

Suitable topics include:

- the nature of practical reasons
- types of reason explanations, their nature and their conditions of adequacy
- the relation between the causes of our behavior and our reason-talk
- the relation between our reason-talk and causal explanation in the BCN sciences
- the explanation of the (seemingly) trustworthy relation between our actions and the reasons we provide for them

- the relation between reason talk, self-understanding, and action
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Friday and Saturday 8-9 June 2012, Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Narrativity, interpretation and responsibility—Call for Papers

Whatever the relation between reasons and behavior it will be clear that research findings in the BCN-sciences indicate that interpretation and reconstruction play an important role in our reason talk. The reasons we provide to understand, explain, and justify ourselves can be seen as an attempt to interpret our behavior in broader narratives (our own, that of the audience and/or the narratives figuring in our society). Coherence in our behavior is partly created by these narratives, and mutual interpersonal understanding is greatly enhanced by shared narratives.

This raises issues about the relation of the narratives to who we are and what we do. How do our attempts to fit our behavior into acceptable narratives influence what we are and what we do? Can narratives obstruct a clear view on who we are and what we do? If so, can we pinpoint ways in which narratives and attempts to fit behavior into a narrative can be inadequate or incorrect?

This workshop invites papers that explore the relevance of narratives and reasons as intermediates between ourselves and society, with an eye on the implications for philosophical accounts of our practices of personal responsibility.

Suitable topics include:

- the relevance of narratives to understanding human action and responsibility
 - self-narrative and social interaction (including inter-group interaction)
 - conditions of adequacy for narratives (especially self-narratives) in relation to our practices of responsibility
 - the relation between self-understanding and action
 - conditions of adequacy of interpretation (e.g., how can we distinguish between an adequate reconstruction of one's reasons and confabulation?)
 - how to understand the empirical findings with regard to the role of narrativity and interpretation in our everyday interactions.
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The Organizers

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