GRSelona 2: Gender, Race and Sexuality. Issues in metaphysics

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GRSelona is a conference about gender, race and sexuality that takes place in Barcelona and this year took place the second edition. It's an occasion for all the researchers from all over the world to discuss and meet other people that study the same topics, to know other studies about these subjects and to exchange ideas about their own works and the others' ones. This year the conference topic was metaphysics. The speakers and the talks this year were: Jennifer Saul (University of Sheffield): 'Generics don't essentialise people; people essentialise people!'; David Ludwig (Columbia University): 'Against the New Metaphysics of Race'; Olivier Lemeire (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium): 'What do you mean 'races don't exist''; Esa Diaz-Leon (University of Manitoba): 'The Metaphysics of Slurs'; Carrie Ichikawa Jenkins (Univ. of British Columbia - Univ. of Aberdeen): 'Metaphysics of Romantic Love'; Teresa Marques (University of Lisbon): 'Varieties of constructionism'; Marta Jorba (University College Dublin) & Maria Rodó de Zárate (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona): 'Disentangling Intersectionality'; Mari Mikkola (Humbolt-Universität zu Berlin): 'Constructionism, Naturalism and Non-Ideal Theory'.

One could doubt why the conference was about both gender and race. This choice derives from recent studies about these themes: it was discovered that it is impossible to separate these topics because they're stictly related. Indeed, one of the interventions was about the relations between the different social categories (see Jorba-Rodò de Zàrate).

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1 *Generics don't essentialise people; people essentialise people!*
Jennifer Saul (University of Sheffield)

Jennifer Saul proposed in her talk a new outlook on generics. Generics are sentences that aims to express a general truth, by doing a generalization that is not restricted in place and time. Examples of generics are sentences like "women are submissive", "chicken are food" and "tigers have stripes". Sally Haslanger and Sarah-Jane Leslie recently argued that generics should be avoided, because they are problematic and politically worrying (Haslanger, 2010) (Leslie, forthcoming). Saul, on the other hand argued that generics are not especially pernicious, and that they can be useful in communication.

As a starting point, Saul considered Leslie's and Haslanger arguments. As Saul explains, Leslie characterized "striking properties" generics as expressions in which dangerous properties are predicated of a kind, like what follows:

(1) Mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus

(2) Black men are violent

As Saul said, according to Haslanger and Leslie, we have the intuition that striking property generics are true even if few subjects possess the predicated dangerous property if the

others that does not have the dangerous properties are disposed, under the right circumstances, to have it. Therefore, in this example even if just 1% of mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus, sentence (1) is true because if even if mosquitoes of the remaining part do not have the striking property, they are disposed, under the right circumstances, to have it.

According to Haslanger, striking properties generics are pernicious because they carries the implicature that the dangerous property is connected with the essence of the kind. For instance, accepting (2) implicate that the violence is something that belongs to the nature of black men. The problem is then that if these implicatures are not blocked, then they will add these common ground of a conversation. Haslanger proposes to use the "metalinguistic negation" (Horn, 1985), that consists in denying the implicature carried on by generics. So when someone is told (2), he should reply with something like (2*) "No, lots of black men are not violent.

Saul criticized this approach, and in particular the need of metalinguistic negation. That is because she denied the truth of striking properties generics like (1) or (2). According to Saul, (1) and (2) are false if belonging to a kind is not a good predictor of having the striking properties. So, for instance, (2) is false since being black is not a good predictor of being violent. One possible objection to this account, as Saul said, is to consider (2) true since black men are nonetheless disposed under right circumstances to be violent. However, Saul pointed out that this would be true also for white women. Differently from Leslie, Saul argues that this is not enough. What would matter for the truth of striking generics is that they will exhibit their striking properties given half a chance. Since they will not, (1) and (2) are simply false.

Once that we grant with Saul that (1) and (2) are false, there is no need to use the metalinguistic negation. Saul argued that since the sentence is false, ordinary negation is good enough to block the pernicious implicature.

Then she continues her criticism by showing that the problem of pernicious and false implicatures, even if it was really worrying, it does not regard just generics, but it could plausibly regard whatever sentences in which a kind term occurs. Sentences like (4) "Many Asian men treat women badly", or (5) "My friend has an Asian friend who talks about treating his wife badly" could carry the implicature that treating men badly is something that belongs somehow to the essence of Asians. However, Saul showed that in this case the metalinguistic negation is not a good solution to block the implicature. It seems odd to reply with "No, many men do, in general" to (4). The fact that the use of metalinguistic negation is thus not able to account for this case is a bad consequence for Leslie's and Haslanger's account.

After this critique, Saul discussed Leslie's empirical evidences in favor of the tendencies of people to think that the properties included in generic sentences belong to the essences of a kind. Saul thinks that Leslie's argument is not compelling since she brings empirical evidence that does not support her conclusion. One of Leslie's empirical evidence aims to show that the use of generics leads children to essentialize the property that is attributed to a kind. In this experiment, four-years-old children were told a story about a population of Zarpies. Children were told that Zarpie eats flowers and that non-Zarpie eats crackers. Then children were asked whether the children of a Zarpie mother raised by a non-Zarpie mother would eat flowers or crackers. Children's response that the baby will eat flowers, according to Leslie, will show that children have acquired essentialist beliefs about Zarpies. However, Saul pointed out that it is not clear-cut that generics are responsible of essentializing. It could very well be that the strange property attributed to Zarpies were responsible for that tendency. In order to establish if generics lead to essentializing or not, Saul suggests to

repeat the experiment with other non-strange properties. Moreover, she suggests to compare data obtained by a generic attribution of a strange property with non-generic attribution of a shared strange property.

Saul discussed also other evidences that Leslie collects from the "real world", like the prejudices that involves Muslims after 9/11. According to her, this evidence is too vague, because it does not support the claim that the use of generics has any role in creating these beliefs. To conclude, Saul suggests that some generics could also be useful against essentializing, for instance sentences like:

(5) Women are expected to wear high heels.

(6) Zarpies are forced to eat butterflies.

(7) Black people are blocked from certain opportunities by the prejudice of others.

References

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2 *Against the New Metaphysics of Race*
David Ludwig (Columbia University)

This talk was about the contemporary debate around the metaphysics of race. Ludwig holds that the debate between race realists and antirealists is not a metaphysical debate but a verbal one and that the contemporary debates around the biological reality of races are based on a confusion between metaphysical and normative classification problems.

The first premise of Ludwig's argument is that the empirical evidence does not determine the ontology of race. Indeed the biological evidence does not determine the existence of biological kinds because the organisms are similar in different ways and degrees. This implies that there could be found many relevant similarities and that depending on which one we use we can postulate different biological kinds. Furthermore, the relevant similarities we find depends on which phenomenon we want to explain with our theory. This means that there are no biological kinds *per se*, but that we find one biological kind or another one depending on which characteristic we are considering and in the end depending on what we are interested in studying and explaining. The second question concerns the identification of biological kinds and races: even though the biological types existed this does not mean that they coincide with races. Depending on how we understand the term "race", the empirical evidence demonstrates the existence of races or their non existence. Ludwig presents the example of Rosenberg's empirical measure. This measure gives a value to a software that, on

this base, divides a population in groups. If the given value is 5, then the groups in which human population is divided correspond to the population of the five continents, and this seems to demonstrates empirically the existence of human races. But if the given value is bigger than 5, then it seems that it is confirmed the non-existence of races. The reason for assign a value bigger than 5 is that to find groups of a level lower than species in other animals it is used an index that compares the genetic variation in the sub-populations with the one of the whole population. But using this index for human beings the result is that races do not exist. But there is no empirical evidence that gives reason to choose for one of these senses of "race". So that it is necessary to have a non empirical evidence for the existence of races.

The second premise is that a non empirical evidence doesn't determine the ontology of race. Actually there are two non empirical evidences that are equally valid but that demonstrate two opposite things: one the existence of races and the other their non existence. The realist evidence assumes the causal theories of reference, that say that a concept refers to a scientific kind even though we have false believes about it. Hence, even though we have false believes about what a race is, this does not imply that the concept of race doesn't have a reference. On the other side, it could be hold that in this case it couldn't be used a causal theory of reference because there is too much difference between the concept that we have and a scientific kind to justified an identification. To identify the concept of "race" with a scientific kind, as for example the Rosenberg's groups with $k = 5$, it would mean using these theories in a too liberal way. Indeed "race" is used in contemporary literature to refer to many different things so that it is not plausible that there is a unique fundamental or admissible specification of this term.

Now we have both an empirical and a non empirical indetermination of race existence and hence we should reject, concludes Ludwig, the idea of a fundamental ontology of race.

Ludwig adds that his deflationist strategy does not require a general deflationist position, which is controversial. Indeed this argument simply means to demonstrate that in this case the opposite ontologies are equivalent, but does not have to assume this methodology as the general one. Furthermore, even though the debates around the existence of races are verbal and not substantial ones, there remains to be solved the normative question of how we should use this concept. This question is a very important one and it risks to be obscured by the metaphysical debates that are, as this argument wanted to demonstrate, no solution.

3 *What do you mean 'races don't exist'* Olivier Lemeire (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium)

Olivier Lemeire in his talk distinguished two anti-realist positions about race. On the one hand, the first anti-realist position (strong realism) claims that if you think that a certain race is associated with certain properties, like having certain skin colour or features of the nose, then you do not find any people that satisfy these properties. The second antirealist position (superficial realism), on the other hand, claims that there are people that have those properties associated with a certain race; however, those people do not constitute a natural kind. So, according to the first position race concepts do not refer, while according to the second position, racial concepts do not refer to a natural kind.

Lemeire then considered Glasgow's (Glasgow, 2009) conceptual and ontological argument

in favour of antirealism about race. The premises of conceptual argument are that the relevant discourse for the debate is folk racial discourse informed by empirical study, and that according to this discourse racial concepts are composed by biological and sometimes social elements. Thus, the relevant racial concepts are biological and sometimes social. The ontological argument starts from this conclusion, and with the premise that there are no biological races and that purely social races are not races in the relevant sense, concludes that the concept of race in the relevant sense is not real.

Since for Glasgow the concept of race is a concept of a group that shares biological properties, we should ask to biologists whether race is a natural kind. However, there are not biologically principled bases of race classification, so races are not a natural kind. Glasgow concludes that since races are not a natural kind, both races are not real and that superficial realism is false. However, according to Lemiere, Glasgow's argument is not effective against the superficial antirealism. That is because if we think that race, in the relevant sense, is the concept of a group of human beings that have certain visible physical features, even if races are not natural kind it does not follows that those groups are an illusion, or that races in the relevant sense do not exist. So superficial realists about races can maintain the "superficial" reality of the group of people that satisfies a determined cluster of properties, without claiming that these groups are natural kinds.

Lemiere then consider two possible counter-arguments to the superficial realist position and he argued that both of them are unconvincing. The first argument is an argument in favour of the claim that race is a natural kind concept. Then if race is a natural kind concept, then there is no distinction between strong and superficial realism. Even if, according to Lemeire this argument fails because it assumes that racial types are entities, however people do not think that racial groups are entities.

The second argument is based on the distinction between general terms, in which the meaning is determined internally, and a natural kind term, in which the meaning is determined externally. So if there are no natural race kinds, then race concepts fails to refer. This argument according to Lemiere is not successful because if race concepts fail to refer, then they are meaningless. However, if they are meaningless then also conceptual analysis would have been impossible.

4 *The Metaphysics of* Slurs
Esa Diaz-Leon (University of Manitoba)

In this talk it is analyzed one problem that concerns "slurs", i.e. the insults directed to one person because of his or her belongings to a group, as for example "chink" or "faggot". Moreover, every slur has a neutral counterpart that refers to the group without insulting its members, as for examples "chinese" or "homosexuals". It is not clear if these terms contribute or not in determining the truth value of the sentences in which they occur. Indeed some occurrences of these terms are better explained by theories that consider that slurs contribute to determine the truth value, while others occurrences are better explained by theories that consider that slurs do not contribute to determine the truth value of the sentence in which they occur. The occurrences of the first kind are called non orthodoxes and we have these when slurs occur as adjectives or adverbs. Hom (2008) wants to give a unifying account of all occurrences of slurs. His proposal is such that slurs always contribute to determine the truth value of the sentence in which they occur. On Hom's opinion for every pejorative term D at m-places and his

neutral counterpart N, the semantic value of D is a complex relation at m-places of the form: every $y_1, \ldots y_n$ should be subject to the deontic prescriptions $p_1*+\ldots+p_n*$ because he/she has the negative properties $d_1*+\ldots+d_n*$ all because he/she is an $N*(y_1, \ldots y_n)$. To account for the orthodox occurrences he uses a pragmatic explanation for which for every orthodox occurrence there is a correspondent non orthodox one. For example for the sentence 1) "the dog is on the fucking couch" there is a non orthodox occurrence 2) "The dog is on the couch where morally impermissible sex occurs". Nevertheless this sentence will result inappropriate for many contexts. Hence the participants to the conversation will calculate a conversational implicature that will produce 3) "The dog being on the couch is an extreme state of affairs (to the same degree of severity of a violation of the moral impermissibility associated with fucking)". In this way Hom's interpretation is able to account for both orthodox and non orthodox occurences.

Furthermore this analysis accounts also for another phenomenon related to the orthodox occurences of slurs, that is the fact that they are not under the scope of the operators. Indeed if a speaker utters "Diana said that Mike is a chink", the derogatory attitude is attributed to the speaker and not to Diana, as uttering "Mike is not a chink" doesn't cancel the pejorative content of the term "chink", even though it is under the scope of a negation. Accounting for slurs in these occurences using conversational implicatures can explain this phenomenon and the fact that the pejorative content expressed in these occurences is cancellable, as conversational implicatures are.

Nevertheless this theory has some problems. A first objection against this analysis is that in the sentences without slurs that correspond to sentences in which some slur occur, as for example 2) in relation to 1), the pejorative content doesn't scope out from the domain of the operators, as it does in slurring sentences. Hom's (2012) solution, developed in Hom and May (2013), is that it has to be distinguished between derogation and offense: derogation is the objective act of predicating some negative property about some subject, while offense is the subjective act of doing some action that causes some feelings and emotions to certain subjects. When a speaker uses a predicate, he /she conversationally implies to considerate that the term is not empty. Hence, a speaker using a pejorative compromise himself/herself with the fact that the term has a non null extension. Because of that the offense is triggered every time the speaker uses a pejorative term, except if he does something to cancel the conversational implicature, uttering for example "Mike is not a chink, because there isn't such a thing".

Jeshion raised some objection to Hom's strategy, to which Diaz-Leon gives an answer. The first criticism is that the offense expressed by the sentence "Mike is a chink" seems to be offensive in the same way and for the same reason as "Mike isn't a chink" one, while for Hom's account the offense has a different origin in these two cases. Indeed in the second case the offense is given by the conversational implicature that is calculated by the speakers, while in the first cases it is not.

Nevertheless, in Diaz-Leon strategy this is not a conclusive reason but at most it could be used to prefer one theory instead to another, but not to reject one. A second objection from Jeshion's is about the example "Mike is not a chink. He is a Jap". In this case it doesn't seem possible, on the contrary of what we would like, to cancel the pejorative content of the sentence. But on Diaz-Leon opinion the reason for this impossibility in this case is the additional claim "He is a Jap". Indeed this addition makes less plausible the reading for which the speaker, using "chink" believes that the term has a null extension and on the other side it adds a derogatory content against Japanese people. Hence, even if there would be a

way to demonstrate that the speaker believes that "chink" is an empty term, the sentence will remain in any case a derogation against Japanese people. In the end Jeshion criticizes Hom's account because it seems not to be able to explain the situation in which a speaker would like to insult someone uttering "you are a chink" without believing that this person has the properties of a "chink". On Hom's interpretation, indeed, the speaker would affirm that the person that he/she intends insult has exactly those properties. But, says Diaz-Leon, Hom's theory allows the case in which a competent speaker uses a pejorative to express properties with the form we saw without associating that description to the term.

Diaz-Leon analyses a last problem for Hom's strategy: following Hom racial ephitets, that are a class of slurs, express a complex of negative properties socially constructed determined by the fact of staying in certain causal relation with racist institutions.

Nevertheless, it doesn't seem clear which is the nature of these causal connections nor how the relevant practices could be the base of racial epithets meaning, given the premise that they are empty terms. All the authors quoted in this talk indeed want to explain the linguistic phenomenon of slurs given this assumption. According to Diaz-Leon's opinion there isn't such a problem if we interpret Hom's strategy as a version of inferentialism, that is to consider that the meaning of pejorative terms is determined by the inferences that these terms trigger. In other words the meaning of "boche" is determined by the chain of inferences: from "x is German" people infer "x is boche" and from "x is boche" people infer "x is cruel". Nevertheless seems to be that this account can be applied only to these speakers that share the racist disposition to follow this inference. On the other side, also those speakers that don't have this disposition are able to understand what the racist refers to when he/she uses a racial epithet. Hence, Diaz-Leon proposes a reformulation of the description associated to a pejorative. For her a pejorative D* would mean "it has to be subject to those discriminatory practices (that are salient in that context) because it has those negative properties (that are salient in that context), all because is a Neutral Counterpart of the Pejorative. It is important to notice that in this description some indexicals occur: this implies that the inferential dispositions that allow to understand the meaning of the pejorative are the same for racists and for non racists and the difference is that while for the first ones there is someone that instantiates this description for the seconds there is not.

Another reason to consider Hom's strategy as a kind of inferentialism is that on this interpretation pejorative terms are a priori empty terms. According to Hom indeed there aren't entities that correspond to the speakers intentions when they use the pejoratives, because racist ideology are false. Hence the racist ideology doesn't determinate successfully if some possible object that shares the descriptive properties associated to the pejorative falls under its extension and because of that nothing is included in it. Furthermore since it is an a priori truth that characteristics as gender, ethnicity, sex, race etc couldn't be morally evaluated, pejoratives are terms that are a priori empty. But if we consider Hom's original strategy it isn't possible to reach this a priori result. On the contrary, if we use Diaz-Leon characterization of Hom's semantic strategy, then pejoratives are a priori empty terms. Indeed they correspond a priori with the description D* and if it is a priori true that racial, gender, sex etc traits couldn't be morally evaluated, then it is a priori true that there is for example no "chink".

5 *Metaphysics of Romantic Love*
Carrie Ichikawa Jenkins (Univ. of British Columbia - Univ. of Aberdeen)

The aim of this talk was to answer to the question if it is possible or not to love more than one person at the same time. This is a metaphysical question, that doesn't be confused with his moral counterpart, that is the question if it is morally admissible to love more than two people at the same time.

The speaker shows how in the contemporary debate the Metaphysical Monogamy thesis, that is the thesis that the only metaphysically possible love relationships are the monogamous ones, is widely shared and that where it isn't defended it is assumed implicitly. Indeed, while in some authors there are arguments in favour of MM (abbreviation of Metaphysical Monogamy), in other ones it is taken for granted, as it is shown by the fact that they freely pass from speaking about "love relationships" to speak about "couple" or that the theories and the experiments are all about the case in which there are only two lovers. On the contrary, in Ichikawa Jenkins' opinion MM is false. Indeed there are many love relationships between more than two persons, in different combinations, from the classical example in which one of the two members of a couple builds a relationship with a third person, to the case of the polyamourous triangles in which the relationship is between three people and one loves and is loved by the other two that share the same partner but that do not love each other. The fact that there exist many examples, and of different kinds, of relationships between more than two persons seems be a counterexample to the MM. Hence all theories that assume this theory should be rejected or modified. But the MM defenders argue that these cases are just a few and so they could be ignored or that the people that have these relationships are wrong when they say to love their partner. The answer to the first objection is that it is not a good method in metaphysics to ignore some cases because they are numerically limited and to consider only the normal and more commune cases. For what concerns the idea that people who say that they love more then one person are simply wrong, Ichikawa Jenkins' answer is that there is no reason to hold that they are mistaken and both for these relationships and the monogamous ones the only way to establish if the partners love each others is to believe to partners' report. Hence, if the partners in a non monogamous relationship affirm to love each others there is no reason to contradict them.

Ichikawa Jenkins' second argument against MM is based on an analogy with other kinds of love that instead are unanimously considered possible between more than two persons. That is, as it isn't considered contradictory to love (in the sense of friendship) more friends nor to love (in the sense of parental love) more children, it shouldn't be considered contradictory to love (in the romantic sense) more than one partner. The answer that MM defenders give to this argument is that the difference between romantic love and other kinds of love lies in the necessary exclusivity that characterizes the first one. Ichikawa Jenkins' objection is that such an argument assumes the MM and so it is question-begging.

The last argument against the thesis that romantic relationships are necessarily monogamous is, contrary to its negation, a very demanding thesis on the metaphysical point of view. Indeed MM is a double universal statement that is "every possible world is such that every love that contain is monogamous". Hence its negation is a double existential statement, that requires that there is at least one world in which at least one love is not monogamous. The latter is clearly less metaphysically demanding than MM.

Finally Ichikawa Jenkins analyses with these instruments two theories, Smith's and Cheng's ones, that require MM, holding that they should be modified or rejected because they're based on a false assumption.

6 *Varieties of constructionism*
Teresa Marques (University of Lisbon)

Teresa Marques presented different versions of constructivism and evaluated them. She tries to analyse how different versions of constructivism can resist to a general criticism to constructivism and what is the better one to allow a social change.

Some categories that have been considered socially constructed by some authors are mental illness, gender, sex, race, etc. Because of that and because these categories are fundamental in determining people self identity, on Marques' opinion it's fundamental to understand what it means that something is socially constructed. Indeed there are different ways in which a category can be socially constructed and many authors have studied this recently.

Marques analyses two pairs of kind of constructivism: objectual contrapposed to conceptual and causal contrapposed to constitutive. The conceptual constructivism concerns the social construction of rappresentations, that is ideas and concepts, while the objectual constructivism concerns the social construction of things, that is, persons, categories, events, properties etc.; she uses the definition that follows for the distinction causally/constitutive constructed: an object or a kind is socially constructed in a causal way when social factors or social agents are causally responsible for the existence of the object or of the instantiation of the corrispondent properties. On the other side an individual or a property F are socially constructed in a constitutive way when it is part of the definition of what it is for someone to be an F, or part of the nature of being an F, that Fs are in some relation with the social agents or social factors.

The causal constructivism is considered by many authors less useful to produce a social change because it seems more difficult to change the categories constructed in this way. Nevertheless according to Marques it has not to be excluded in principle. She analyses the case of the characterization of what gender is to evaluate if it's true that a causal intepretation of this makes the change of some discriminatory practices based on gender more difficult. To consider the "gender" category as socially constructed in the constitutive sense means to hold that the existence of a gender stereotype provokes behaviours in individuals such as to conform to it and that the individuals are treated by the others on the basis of the stereotype. Marques presents an experiment that shows how this happens in real life. In this experiment the results of two groups of university students are compared in a calculus test. To one of the groups it was said that the aim of the test was to discover what makes some people better in maths than other ones, while the second group was told that after testing that exam with thousands of students no difference was found between men and women. The girls in the first group realized the same scores as the male students, while the female students in the second group had the best score than all the others, from both groups. Hence, it seems that female students have a lower performances than their real abilities in this task because women are considered less capable in maths than men. So it could be given a social construction of gender in the causal sense saying that the social factors or social agents are causally responsible for the self conception that people have and for the fact that they instantiate on themselves some traits of the stereotype, as for example low abilities in abstraction or in calculus and a

strong disposition for empathy. This implies that make a social change means to cancel the causes of this social construction.

But for Haslanger and Diaz-Leon this on the one hand would require too much time and on the other hand it's not clear that this characteristics exist only as a consequence of these social causes. Both authors conclude that for this reason a genuine comprehension of social construction requires the constitutive sense of social construction. Nevertheless, Marques highlights that it is exactly the fact that these abilities exist as a consequence of the social construction that makes them unfair. Indeed if we believed that one of those female students were incapable of this task for by her nature, then there would be nothing unfair in the fact that she wouldn't be allowed to do a job in which these abilities are fundamental. What is unfair is that capable people have lower performances or that they leave some opportunities of career because they have false beliefs about their capacities. That is, what is unfair is that some results depend on social causes. In this sense, hence, it is possible to characterise social construction in a causal sense and non necessary in a constitutive one.

Then Marques tests these two kinds of constructivism in relation to Boghossian's objection to facts constructivism in general. Boghossian's argument against constructivism is that human beings could not have constructed facts because human history began later than world one and so many facts existed before than human beings did. Hence, it isn't possible that human beings constructed these facts. With respect to human categories, says Marques, this is the same as asking "how could there be certain categories of people, before the societies and cultures that constructed those categories existed?" Marques reconstructs the argument on the basis of this criticism in the following way:

1) Categories X of people existed before the societies implementing particular conventions on X did.

2) Societies and cultures cannot 'construct category X' retroactively. In other words, society-dependent conventions and norms only exist within those very same societies and cultures.

3) Hence, categories X of people at stake are not socially constructed.

Nevertheless 1) does not seem clearly true. If for example we consider the category of homosexuality it isn't clear that this one exists before a society constructs it. Actually, it isn't the same thing to practice some homosexual sex and to consider oneself homosexual. Concerning this point Marques presents a study made in Africa in which people that have usually sex with people of their same sex deny to define themselves homosexuals. Hence 1) seems to be at least in doubt. Also 2) seems to have some problems. Indeed if we consider 2) in terms of constitutive conventions, there are many counterexamples to this statement. Marques uses as an example the fact that, in spite of calendars being a human invention and the concept of year is socially constructed, we can use this concept to count the temporal distance between events that happened before calendars were started to be used, as for example the dinosaurs extinction. This seems to be a case in which societies and cultures have constructed retroactively a category and so it is a counterexample to 2). Hence the constitutive constructivism seems to resist Boghossian's criticism. As for what concerns causal constructivism, instead, Marques uses the example of mental illness. Indeed, it was hold that this category has social causes and that it is socially constructed. Nevertheless, since there are many ways of classifying mental illness, it does not seem possible to evaluate whether our descriptions are true

or false on respect to something independent from a certain way to classify mental illness. So this is one way in which also causal constructivism can resist the kind of criticism.

Hence Marques showed how also causal constructivism can be useful for an analysis that looks for a social change and that objectual constructivism resists to general criticism to constructivism as Boghossian's, both if it is interpreted in a causal or in a constitutive sense.

7 *Disentangling Intersectionality*
Marta Jorba (University College Dublin) & Maria Rodó de Zárate (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

Marta Jorba and Maria Rodò de Zárate gave a talk titled "disentangling intersectionality". This talk focused on a recent approach, called intersectionality, which is a framework to deal with different social categories, like gender, race, class. The speakers claim that the need of this approach is due to the explanatory insufficiency of the additive model that considers categories as separate in accounting experience of oppression or privilege. That is because, according to them, when different categories are present in the experience of the subject, they do not merely add together, but they rather change the nature of the category. For instance, the oppression of black women cannot be accounted simply by considering gender oppression and racism separately, because these categories are interrelated.

In their talks, Jorba and Rodò de Zárate begin by assuming that mutual constitution of the categories is a viable alternative to the additive model. Then, they proceed to consider different possible ways of understanding intersectionality, concluding that the relation of the categories is a unity relation, because different experiences of oppression or privileges are unified in experience.

They firstly considered the possibility that the intersectional relation is a relation of simultaneity. However, they claimed that this is not a compelling view, because a simultaneity relation does not imply any relation among categories beyond the occurrence at the same time. Secondly, they ask whether the relation between categories is a relation of intensification. The idea is that there are some cases in which a kind of oppression due to a social category might be magnified by another one. For instance regarding the right to abortion, the oppression caused by being a woman might be intensified by being poor. However, this approach is also not satisfying because there are cases in which, given stigmatized social categories, an intensification of oppression does not occur, and, maybe, there might be mitigation of oppression. That seems to be the case for instance when a lesbian woman turn out to be less oppressed for instance by division of labours at home.

The other relation they considered is supervenience, according to which A supervenes upon B if, and only if, a difference in A implies a difference in B. The speakers claim that this account also fails because there are cases in which there are two different social categories but none of them supervenes on another. For instance, a man, no matter whether black or white, might have the same experience of privilege. Another relation is the relation of disruption. The idea is that one system of oppression might disrupt another category. The problem is that the consequence of disruption seems to collapse into fusion. By fusing different intersections give rise to different categories. However, also this approach was considered problematic, because different intersections, for instance, give rise to different genders. The problem with fusion is, according to the speakers, that this seems to be committed to accept a large number

of genders, and this is counterintuitive. Moreover, it is also dubious whether this relation effectively helps in understanding the relation between categories. Finally, Jorba and Rodò de Zárate consider the relation of mutual constitution between categories, and they motivated why this account also has difficulties, that mainly lies in explaining how a social category mutual constitutes each other.

After having motivated why all these possible approaches are unsatisfactory, they proposed their own account, according to which experience of oppression and privilege are unity relations. They argued that different experiences of oppression or privilege are unified in producing a single experience of oppression. As a result, the whole experience is constituted by all the identities of the subject. More formally, they claimed that, necessarily, for any subject of experience of oppression or privilege and any time t, the simultaneous experience of oppression and privilege that the subject has at t will be subsumed by a single experience of oppression and privilege.

They concluded their talk by elucidating the advantages on their approach and by stressing, among other things, that in their account what matters is not the relation between categories but their role in the constitution of experiences.

8 *Constructionism, Naturalism and Non-Ideal Theory* **Mari Mikkola (Humbolt-Universität zu Berlin)**

In her talk, Mary Mikkola argued that naturalism and social constructionism are compatible views, and she proposed a new methodology for a naturalist social philosophy, namely, naturalist non-ideal theory. As Mikkola said, adhering to naturalism commits to believe that if there are things that are not physical, they are still part of the causal order. However, as Mikkola stressed, that is compatible with social constructionism, because it does not have to deny that social construction are part of the causal world. The speaker then suggests that political naturalism should be intended as non-ideal theory.

The first effort of Mikkola was providing a characterization of a not-ideal theory. The simpler possible formulation is that not-ideal theory should avoid ideal theory. As she said, theories are considered ideal when they aim to develop general prescriptive principles in order to outline the basic structure of society and when they use a method of abstraction from the actual situation. An example of ideal theory is Rawl's theory of justice Rawls (1971).

However, her model of non-ideal theory is not just the rejection of ideal theories, but it has to be intended in his strong sense, as grounding the philosophical work in actual and non-ideal states of affairs. According to Mikkola, there are three ways in which we can intend ideal theory, that are a) ideal as normative model, b) ideal as descriptive model and c) ideal as idealized model. Between these three models, according to Mikkola the problematic one is the latter. That is because, according to Mikkola, the idealized ideal model is based on an idealized way of understanding human agency that could be misleading. The problem with ideal theories is that they take the ideal as a starting point, and they represents the actual as a mere derivation from the ideal.

Another problem with ideal theory is the use and the importance of abstraction. In this respect, Mikkola presented the debate between O'Neil and Schwartzman. On the one hand, as she says, O'Neil thinks that a certain grade of abstraction is unavoidable in reasoning, and that the real problem with ideal theory is idealization, because it that adds to much false information about agents, giving them super-human cognitive or volitional capacities. On the

other hand, Schwartzman expressed worries about abstraction, because it could bracket too much, and it needs to be correlated with criteria that decide which omissions are legitimate. However, according to him, an idealization is needed: feminism, for instance, needs a conception of ideal as normative, because they needs to know how things ought to be, in order to get from oppression to utopia. Nonetheless, this idealization, according to the speaker is not necessary. What is compelling, according to Mikkola, is de ideal as descriptive model. This means that given an unjust reality, the model should not idealize; it does not start with abstract principles, but abstracts from "actual cases". This view requires being able to explain what are the right abstractions to be done. A good abstraction according to Mikkola, has to have four features: firstly, it does not have to reduce normative philosophy to empirical investigation, but philosophy and empirical investigation have to interact. Secondly, it has to start from actual cases, and abstracts from them. Thirdly, the object of the philosophical analyses should be embedded in social practices, which cannot be discarded as irrelevant. Lastly, a good abstraction has to reject supernatural or mysterious kinds of entities.

References

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