IZWT

EINLADUNG ZUM KOLLOQUIUM

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in collaboration with Siegfried Jaag
(Düsseldorf)

Inductive Metaphysics:

Metaphysical Modelling, Curve Fitting, and Error-Robustness

The use of models such as the Lotka-Volterra model for predator/prey-population-dynamics have proven to be tremendously useful in the sciences. Recently, philosophers have suggested that applying models in metaphysics is also a legitimate enterprise (see Godfrey-Smith 2006a, 2012; Nolan 2005; Paul 2012). This talk discusses to which extent a modelling attitude can be applied in metaphysics, which types of models can be used, and whether models serve only as test cases for philosophical theories or whether these theories can themselves be understood as models. A closely related issue is curve fitting and error-robustness: Instead of formulating ever more complicated functions that exactly fit every experimentally determined data point, scientists usually formulate a simpler function that merely approximates the data. The data points that are not 'covered' by the function are handled as outliers, often said to be results of measurement errors. In metaphysics the attitude towards outliers is quite different: Often a single putative counterexample, usually revealed by a thought experiment, is considered sufficient reason to dismiss or at least to substantially revise an otherwise successful theory. Inspired by Williamson (see 2016, 280; 2018, 137–40), we argue that abductive virtues such as unifying power and simplicity and in particular the model-building methodology can enable us to balance alleged counterevidence and thus to arrive at less error-fragile theories.

Prof. Dr. Markus Schrenk studierte Philosophie, Logik & Physik (Magister) an der Universität Bonn. Er an promovierte in Oxford und war dort mehrere Jahre als Dozent tätig. Nach weiteren Stationen im In- & Ausland (Nottingham, Luxemburg, Köln) nahm er 2014 einen Ruf an die Heinrich-Heine-Universität in Düsseldorf an. Seine Lehr- und Forschungsschwerpunkte liegen in der Metaphysik (Naturgesetze, Dispositionen, Kausalität, Modalität), in der Wissenschafts- & Sprachphilosophie. Zu seinen wichtigsten Büchern zählen das Handbuch Metaphysik und die Monographie Metaphysics of Science.

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